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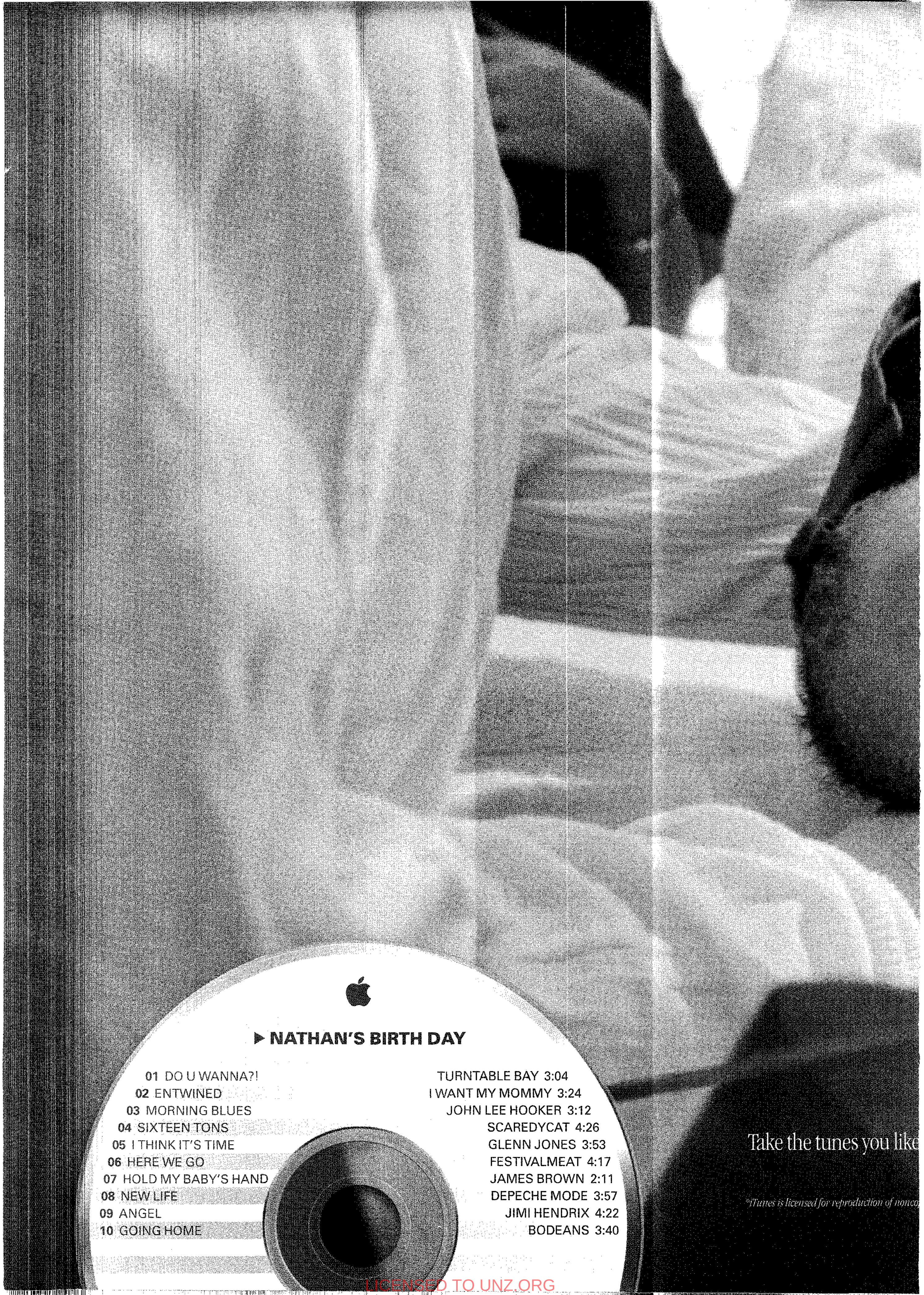
APRIL 9, 2001


NATHAN'S BIRTH DAY
01 DO U WANNA?! TURNTABLE BAY 3:04
02 ENTWINED I WANT MY MOMMY 3:24
03 MORNING BLUES JOHN LEE HOOKER 3:12
04 SIXTEEN TONS SCAREDYCAT 4:26
05 I THINK IT'S TIME GLENN JONES 3:53
06 HERE WE GO FESTIVALMEAT 4:17
07 HOLD MY BABY'S HAND JAMES BROWN 2:11
08 NEW LIFE DEPECHE MODE 3:57
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10 GOING HOME BODEANS 3:40
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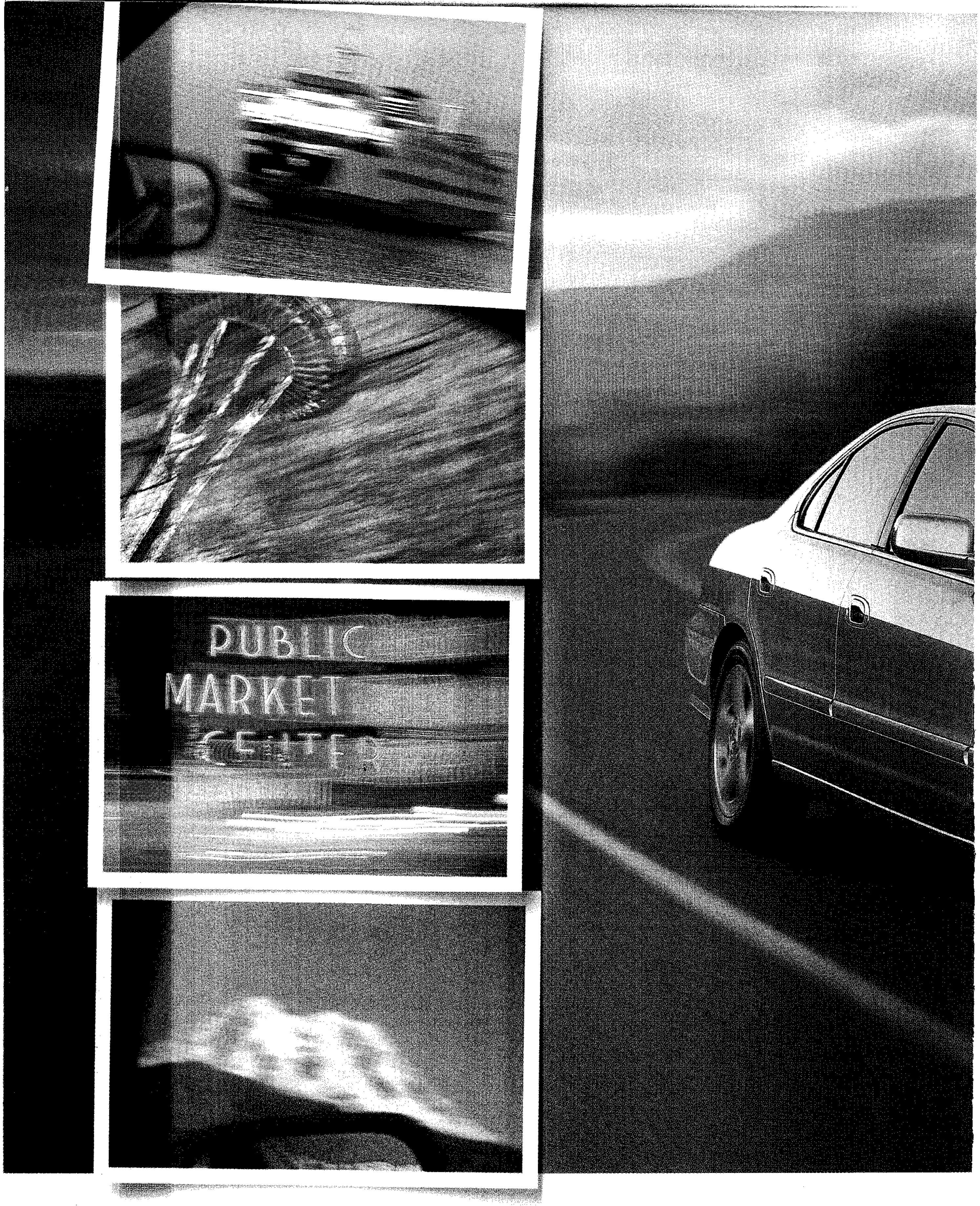

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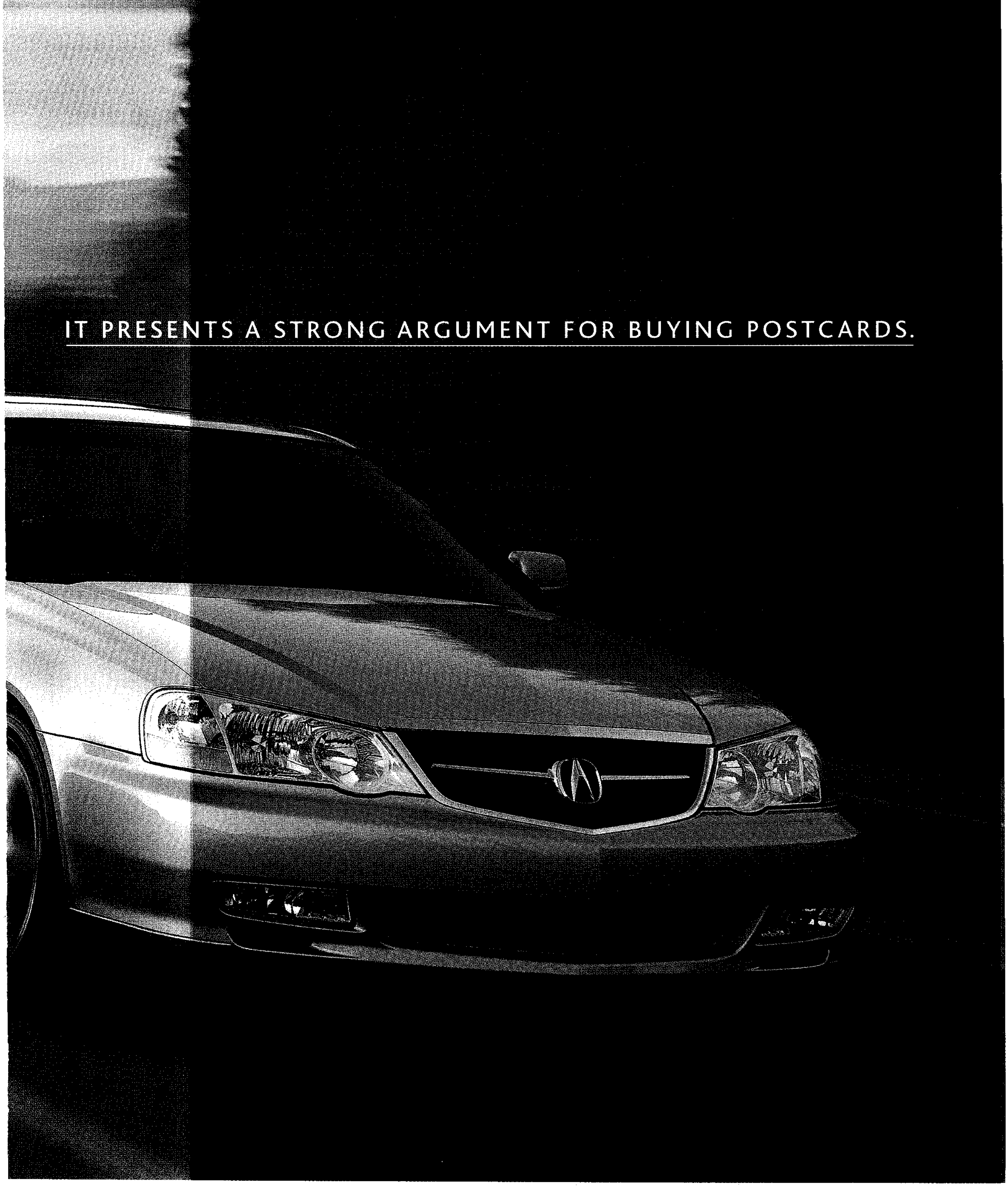
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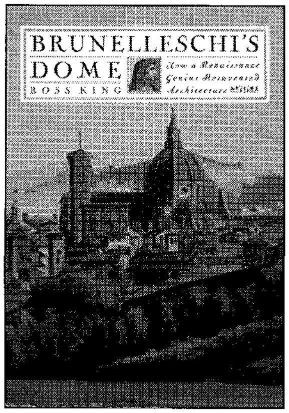

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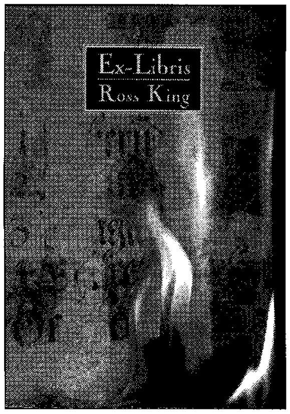

WALKER & COMPANY

THE NEW YORKER

APRIL 9, 2001

10 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
37 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Scarlett's slaves speak; viral marketing.

Bill Bryson 44 PERSONAL HISTORY
The Baseball Writer
My father, Babe Ruth, and me.
Mark Singer 50 U.S. JOURNAL
Dirty Laundry
A suburban police force out of control.
Katherine Boo 92 A REPORTER AT LARGE
After Welfare
Does work make you a better mother?
John Nathan 108 PROFILES
Tokyo Story
The pop idol of Japanese nationalism.
Michael Chabon 116 FICTION
"The God of Dark Laughter"

THE CRITICS
John Lahr 128 THE THEATRE
"Bat Boy," "The Book of Liz," "Mnemonic."
BOOKS
Nicholas Lemann 131 *The new ideologues of geography.*
135 Briefly Noted
Alex Ross 136 MUSICAL EVENTS
Prokofiev's "The Gambler."
David Denby 138 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"Blow," "Heartbreakers," "Say It Isn't So."

POEMS
Glyn Maxwell 89 "The Sea Comes In Like Nothing But the Sea"
Sharon Olds 132 "Silence, with Two Texts"

COVER *"Time for a Walk," by Bob Zoell* THE BACK PAGE *"The Seder Plate at Ye Olde Yankee Inne," by Roz Chast* DRAWINGS *Lee Lorenz, Mike Twohy, David Sipress, Michael Maslin, Danny Shanahan, Robert Mankoff, Charles Barsotti, Leo Cullum, Michael Crawford, Edward Koren, Mick Stevens, Pat Byrnes, P.C. Vey, Robert Weber, Michael Shaw, Frank Cotham, John Caldwell*

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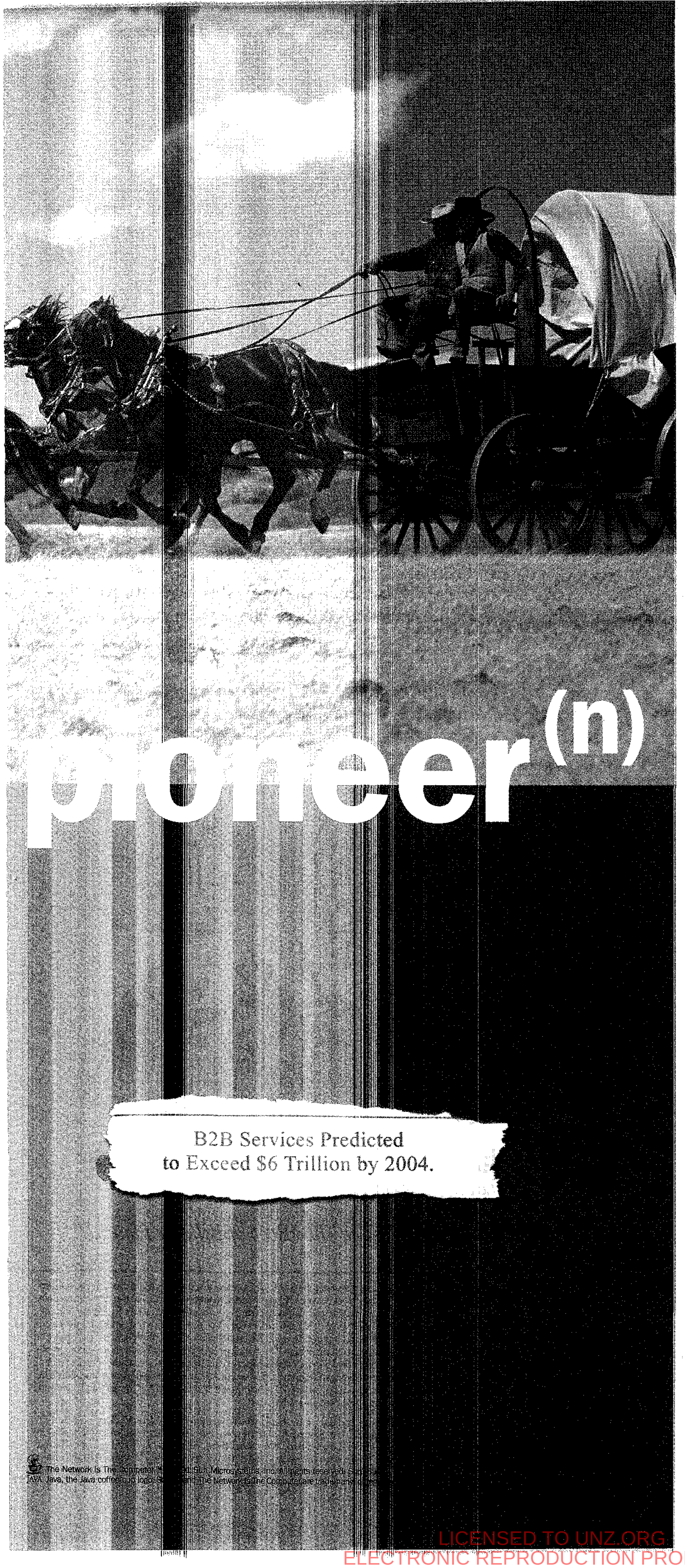

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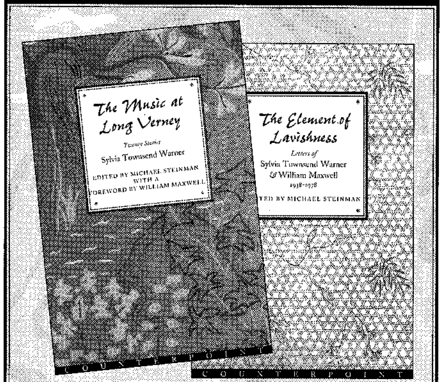
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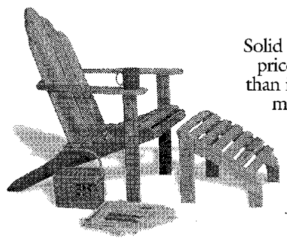

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Michael Chabon (Fiction, p. 116) is the author of two collections of short stories and three novels, including, most recently, "The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay."

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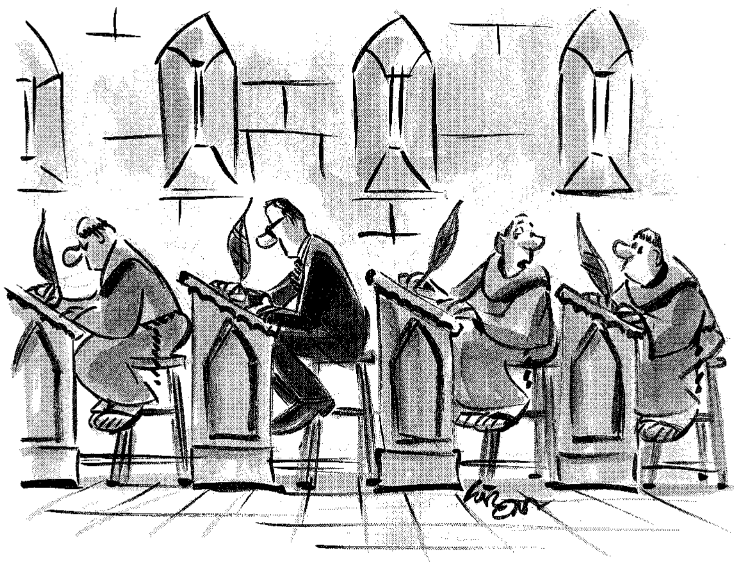

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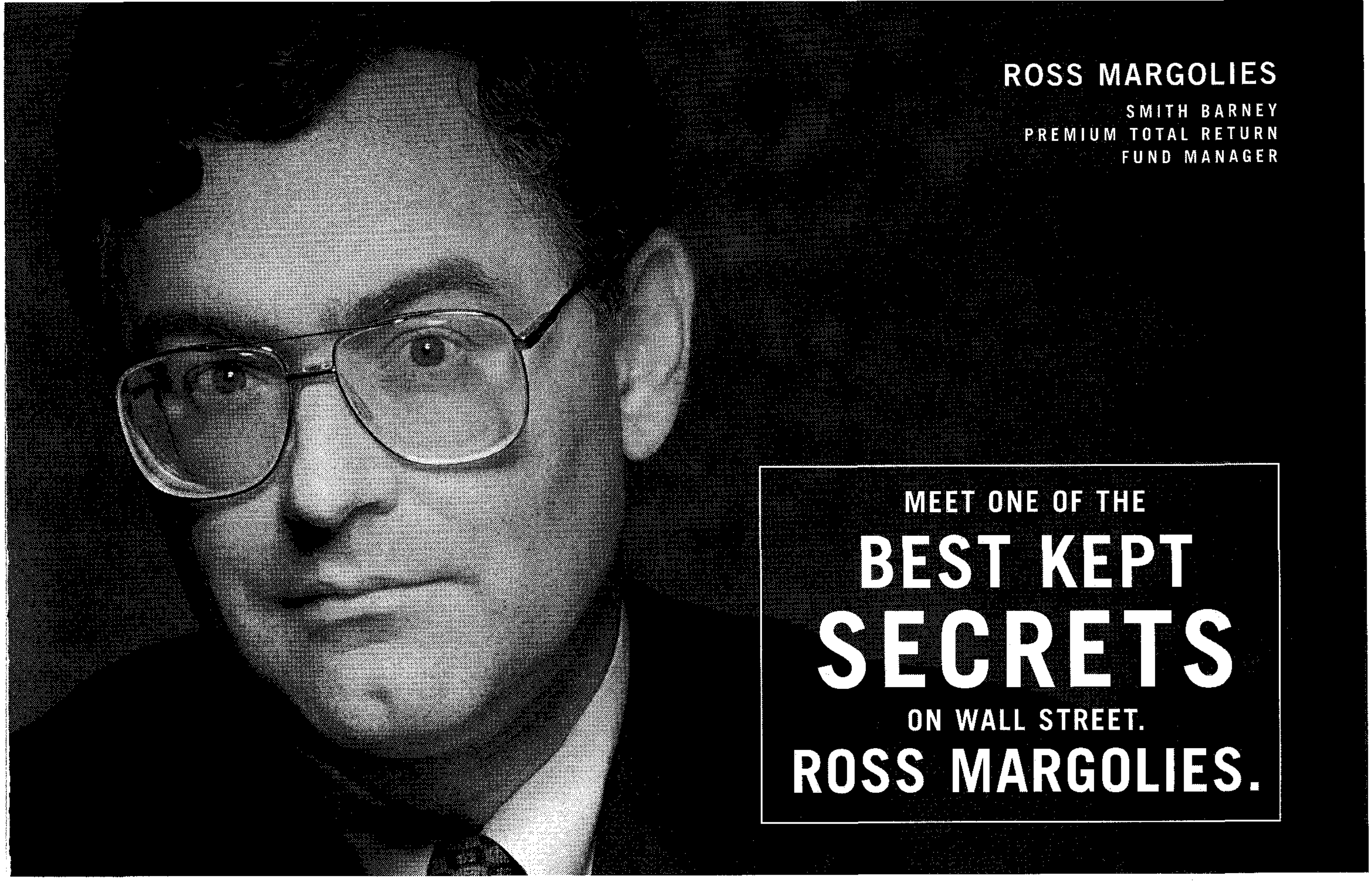

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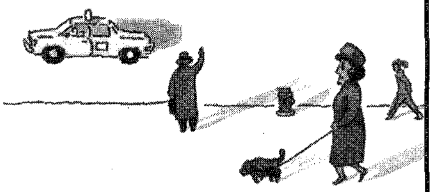

ABOUT TOWN
The *New Yorker* and
the World It Made
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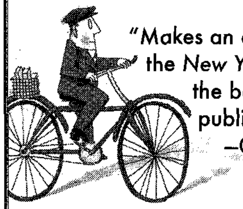

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AUTOPSIES AT A PRICE

Atul Gawande asks why fewer and fewer autopsies are being conducted in this country ("Final Cut," March 19th). In the early nineteen-seventies, when I was a resident, our teaching hospital needed a high autopsy rate to keep its accreditation, and there was intense pressure from teachers to "get the post" on every death. This led to creative methods of persuading reluctant relatives to give their consent. I once suggested to the family of an Orthodox Jew that the organism that caused his pneumonia—and its possible effect on his grandchildren, who lived with him—would remain unknown if an autopsy was not done. A colleague told a family he knew to be impoverished that a relative of theirs who had died of stomach cancer had swallowed a golden ball as part of his therapy, and that if there was no autopsy to recover it they would be stuck with the bill. They signed. Maybe declining consent rates are, in part, a by-product of the trend toward more honesty from medical personnel. And maybe lost data is not such a high price to pay for that.
Marc A. Rifkin
Los Angeles, Calif.

KING OF NEW YORK

Hendrik Hertzberg, while deploring the destruction of the monumental Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan, observes that Anglo-American culture was "little diminished" when a mob of drink-fortified New York patriots toppled the imposing equestrian statue of King George III in lower Manhattan in 1776 (The Talk of the Town, March 19th). But, while the trashing of George III does not compare to the Taliban's act of vandalism, it was still a significant loss to the cultural patrimony of America. There is not a single major artifact in the city to attest to its past as the administrative center from which the British ruled the American colonies in the name of the King. As the State Historian of New York in the nineteen-seventies, I argued, unsuccessfully, for reërecting the statue of George III. Without him, the British heritage of New York remains uncommemorated.
Louis Leonard Tucker
Boston, Mass.

DIGITAL SWEATSHOPS

Paul Goldberger's comment that, thanks to computers, architectural drawings that once took days can now "be completed in a minute or two" is ill-advised and frustrating (The Sky Line, March 12th). Architects were already riding a knife's edge between profit and loss before computers came along and unrealistically raised clients' expectations. Hand-drafting was extremely time-consuming; so is computer-drafting. Whether by pencil or mouse, someone has to put all those lines in the right place. Yet clients seem to think that we simply push a button and go get coffee. The advantages that computers offer are cancelled out by the ever-increasing demands for trips back to the drawing board. Drive by any cutting-edge architecture firm late at night and you'll see the lights on.
Matt Cohen
Seattle, Wash.

A COALITION OF ONE

Elizabeth Kolbert, in her appraisal of Fernando Ferrer's mayoral candidacy and the art of building ethnic coalitions ("That's Freddy," March 19th), suggests that Fiorello LaGuardia was able to reach outside his own ethnic group to pull in the Jewish vote. In fact, LaGuardia was all Italian and half Jewish—a little coalition unto himself—and much of the Jewish electorate claimed him as one of their own.
Daniel M. Klein
Great Barrington, Mass.

•

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			4	5	6	7
8	9	10				

THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER
The musical. With a score by Don Schlitz and a book by Ken Ludwig. Scott Ellis is the director. In previews. (Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 307-4100.)

BELLS ARE RINGING
Faith Prince and Marc Kudisch lead the cast in a revival of the 1956 Betty Comden–Adolph Green–Jules Styne musical about a telephone operator who falls for a playwright. Tina Landau is the director. In previews. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

CRIMES OF THE HEART
Garry Hynes directs a Second Stage revival of Beth Henley's 1981 play, starring Enid Graham, Amy Ryan, and Mary Catherine Garrison. In previews. (307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

FOLLIES
A Roundabout Theatre Company revival of James Goldman and Stephen Sondheim's 1971 musical, starring Blythe Danner, Gregory Harrison, Judith Ivey, and Treat Williams. Matthew Warchus is the director. Two previews on April 4. Opens April 5 at 6:30. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

FORTY-SECOND STREET
Michael Cumpsty, Christine Ebersole, Mary Testa, and Jonathan Freeman star in a revival of the 1980 musical comedy. In previews. (Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

JENNIE RICHEE
The Ridge Theatre, the playwright Mac Wellman, and the composer Julia Wolfe collaborated on this multimedia play inspired by the life and work of Henry Darger, an American outsider artist who died in 1973. April 6 and April 10 at 8 and April 7 at 3 and 8. Continues through April 14. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793.)

LACKAWANNA BLUES
Ruben Santiago-Hudson performs his memory play about growing up in Lackawanna, New York, in the fifties. Previews begin April 6. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

THE NEW WONDERTWINS IN SPARKLEVISION
A new extravaganza from the performance duo of Rebecca Finnegan and Susan Blackwell, directed by Gary Schwartz. April 5-7 at 8:30. Continues through April 14. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST
From Chicago, a Steppenwolf Theatre revival of Dale Wasserman's adaptation of the 1962 Ken Kesey novel, starring Gary Sinise. Terry Kinney is the director. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE PRODUCERS
Matthew Broderick and Nathan Lane star in Mel Brooks's musical version of his 1968 movie, under the direction of Susan Stroman. In previews. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

REFERENCES TO SALVADOR DALI MAKE ME HOT
Rosie Perez portrays a lonely army wife whose husband suffers from Gulf War syndrome, in a new play by José Rivera. In previews through April 8. Opens April 9 at 7. (Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

SAINT LUCY'S EYES
Ruby Dee stars as an abortionist in Memphis during the Civil Rights movement, in a drama by Bridgette A. Wimberly. In previews. (Women's Project Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

TAMBURLAINE
The Target Margin Theatre continues its Christopher Marlowe season with the playwright's 1587 ten-acter, presented in two acts a night. Opens April 4 at 8 and continues through April 22. (Theatorium, 198 Stanton St. For more information, call 358-3657.)

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA
Theatre for a New Audience presents Shakespeare's play, under the direction of Sir Peter Hall. In previews. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

URINETOWN: THE MUSICAL
A musical comedy by Mark Hollmann and Greg Kotis, about a city in a state of ecological disaster. John Rando is the director. In previews. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BAT BOY: THE MUSICAL
A musical inspired by a tabloid story about a half-boy, half-nocturnal flying mammal. Written by Keythe Farley and Brian Flemming, with music and lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

THE BOOK OF LIZ
The Drama Dept. presents a new comedy by the Talent Family (David and Amy Sedaris). (Reviewed in this issue.) (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 239-6200.)

BOY GETS GIRL
Although Rebecca Gilman's new play begins with a blind date, this is no romance. Rather, it's a thriller, whose basic story line you've seen many times before on TV and in the movies. There are several fine performances, but the merits of Gilman's ideas about sexual politics are ground down under the lockstep march of the melodramatic plot. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/5/01.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 8.)

CARTAS: A NUN IN LOVE
A stage adaptation of the seventeenth-century "Lettres de la Religieuse Portugaise," said to be correspondence from a Portuguese nun to a French officer who deserted her, translated and performed by Myriam Cyr. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 529-4530. Closes April 15.)

A CLASS ACT
Ed Kleban's life following his success as the lyricist of "A Chorus Line" is the basis of this musical. With songs by Mr. Kleban and a book by Linda Kline and Lonny Price. Mr. Price is the director. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

CODE OF THE WEST
Mark R. Giesser's play about the San Franciscan Joshua A. Norton, who proclaimed himself emperor of the United States and protector of Mexico in the eighteen-fifties. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200.)

DESIGN FOR LIVING
To be great, comedy must be cruel, and that is why it is usually written by the young. Though he wrote it when he was only thirty-four, Noël Coward's (then scandalous) 1933 tale of an insouciant ménage à trois (Jennifer Ehle, Dominic West, and Alan Cumming) is more a lecture masquerading as theatre; it's too schematic and too self-important for the cruelty to play out in surprising ways. Here, the director Joe Mantello has encouraged the scenic designer Robert Brill to go gargantuan with the sets, as a kind of metaphor for the characters' grandiosity, and it's a choice that unwittingly emphasizes the gimcrack quality of the play's structure. Otherwise, the production is superbly cast and well focussed. (3/26/01) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
These days, ridiculing Broadway is like shooting fish in a barrel, so it's amazing that the latest version of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running satirical revue manages to fire off as many good ones as it

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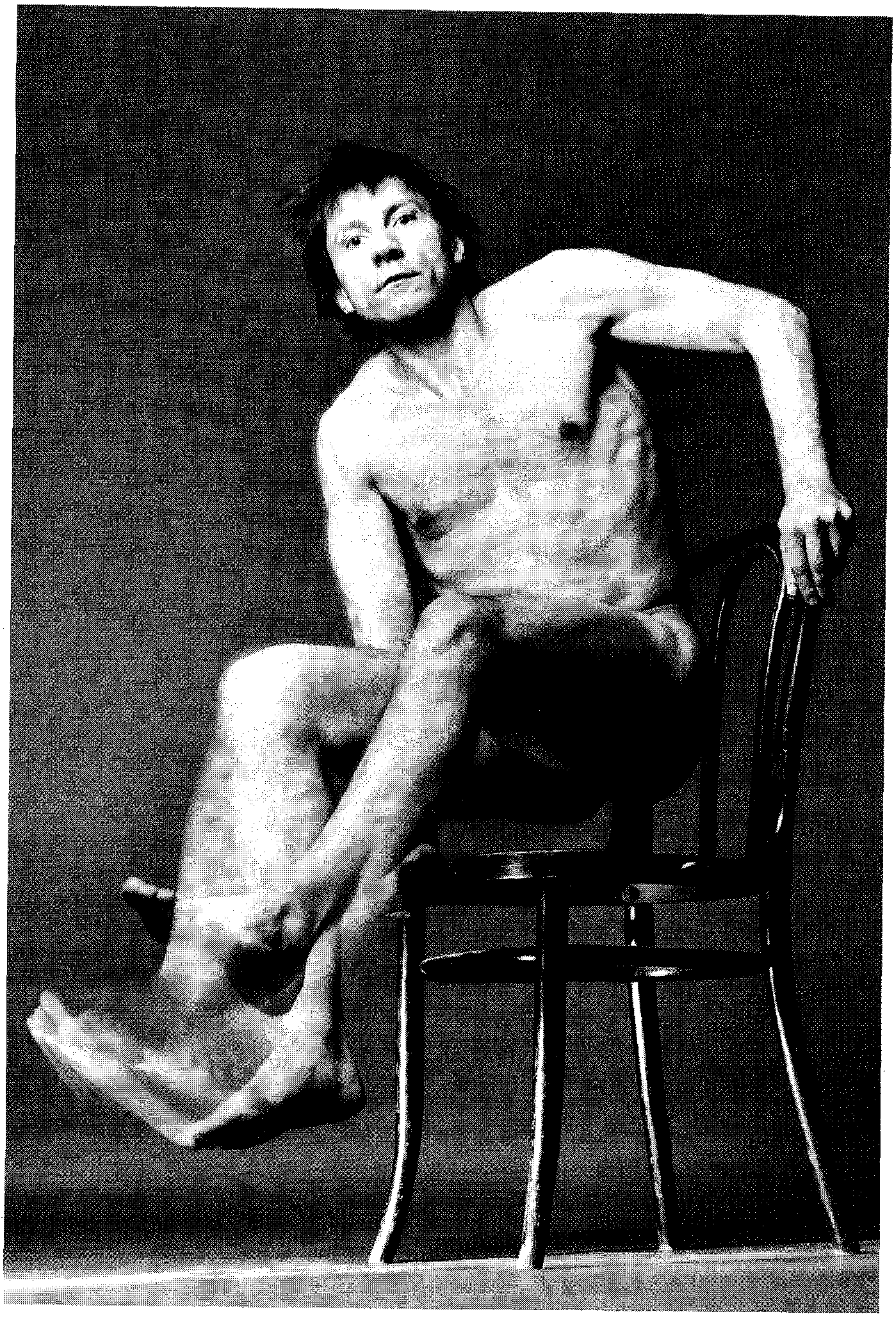

Simon McBurney, in Theatre de Complicite's "Mnemonic."

DUDLEY REED

does. Thank goodness the wonderful Christine Pedi is still in the show; her loopy, loving imitations of yesteryear's biggies—Elaine Stritch, Liza Minnelli, Ethel Merman, and Barbra Streisand—are more than worth the trip and the price of a ticket. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

THE GATHERING

Will Power's one-man show blends hip-hop and African-American folklore to explore what he considers the primary meeting places for black men: the barbershop, the basketball court, the street, and the world of music. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes April 14.)

IN DREAMS AND GIMPEL

An evening of plays adapted from two short stories, Isaac Bashevis Singer's "Gimpel the Fool" and Delmore Schwartz's "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," both starring David Margulies. (Maverick, 307 W. 26th St. 239-6200.)

THE INVENTION OF LOVE

Tom Stoppard's latest play stars Richard Easton and Robert Sean Leonard, who portray the poet A. E. Housman at the end of his life and as a young man. Jack O'Brien is the director. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JANE EYRE

John Caird and Paul Gordon's musical is respectful of and faithful to Brontë's original, but it needs to be brilliant and piercing, and it isn't. Though the show's book is a fair job, the music is schmaltzy, and the modern stage devices—the endless projections of trees and sky may make you feel like you're watching the Weather Channel—don't quite bring Brontë to life. The appealing cast is led by Marla Schaffel, who is the very picture of the Jane Eyre in your mind's eye. Directed by Mr. Caird and Scott Schwartz. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG

Maximilian Schell and George Grizzard lead the cast in the Abby Mann drama. John Tillinger is the director. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6280.)

LOBBY HERO

In another era, the contrivances in Kenneth Lonergan's new play, set in the lobby of a Manhattan apartment house, would have been called hokum. The security guard ponders why he was dishonorably discharged from the Navy for smoking pot. His ambitious black boss, a rules freak, is forced to jeopardize his career by lying to the police in order to keep his brother—the probable murderer of a mother of three—out of jail. The two hapless cops investigating the murder, one sleazy, the other inept, are having an affair. But because Lonergan is the writer and director of the moving and successful film "You Can Count on Me" and the author of the highly praised plays "This Is Our Youth" and "The Waverly Gallery," the public is expecting him to aim high. Instead, Lonergan aims low and misses. Mark Brokaw is the director. (3/26/01) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes April 14.)

MNEMONIC

Simon McBurney and his Theatre de Complicite have winged it over from London to present their latest project, in which the concept of memory is explored through ostensibly unrelated stories. (Reviewed in this issue.) (John Jay College, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. 239-6200.)

NEWYORKERS

A satirical revue about life in Manhattan, by Glenn Slater (lyrics) and Stephen Weiner (music). Christopher Ashley is the director. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

NO NIGGERS, NO JEWS, NO DOGS

Primary Stages presents a new play by John Henry Redwood, about a black woman's friendship with a Jewish scholar in North Carolina in the forties. (354 W. 45th St. 333-4062.)

NOW THAT COMMUNISM IS DEAD, MY LIFE FEELS EMPTY

Richard Foreman's forty-eighth play has many of the whacked-out elements audiences have come to expect from the father of downtown theatre—a disorienting set loaded with veiled signifiers, nubile women whose semi-sadomasochistic garb is offset by intellectual-nerd glasses; a gorilla; an outright air of menace; and characters who seem both alienated and—especially lately—somehow perfectly at home in it all. Foreman's plays used to be enigmatic, exhilarating blows to the brain. With this latest work, the formula has got so comfortable that it seems like shtick. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

NUYORICAN VOICES

A trio of plays by Latino playwrights, performed in rotating repertory: "Giants Have Us in Their Books," by José Rivera; "Unmerciful Good Fortune," by Edwin Sanchez; and "Miriam's Flowers," by Migdalia Cruz. (INTAR, 508 W. 53rd St. 279-4200.)

PASSION PLAY

Peter Nichols' 1981 dark comedy, about a couple destroyed by an affair. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

A stage adaptation by Joe O'Byrne of Oscar Wilde's novel. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY

In Edward Albee's new play, an older couple provide a harsh taste of what life has in store for a young couple with a new baby: the ravages of adulthood, the tidal wave of troubles and injuries that come with time. Brian Murray and Marian Seldes, two veterans who are rarely less than riveting, make the most of Albee's sharp, enigmatic writing; their highly stylized, virtuosic performances here are stunning. David Esbjornson directed. (2/19 & 26/01) (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

Rather than a revival of Richard O'Brien's 1973 musical, a glam tribute to fifties horror flicks, Christopher Ashley's production is an unsexy and oddly earnest homage to the 1975 cult-movie adaptation. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE

Lily Tomlin is back on Broadway in the one-woman, thirteen-character show written for her by her longtime collaborator, Jane Wagner, and what's not to love about that? Tomlin is terrific—moving, funny, and as lithe and vibrant as she was when she first performed the show here, fifteen years ago. This is a chance to see a remarkable life force in action. (11/27/00) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SERVICEMEN

From the New Group, a drama by Evan Smith, about a socialite and a playboy who frequent the hangouts of departing enlisted men in New York during the Second World War. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

SEUSSICAL
For all the whimsy of Theodor Geisel's doggerel, what's missing in this relentlessly cute musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty is mayhem and magic. With the exception of one gentle and winning performance—by Kevin Chamberlin as Horton the Elephant, who gets conned into hatching an egg—it's a show with curiously little charm. (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

A SKULL IN CONNEMARA
The middle play in Martin McDonagh's Leenane trilogy (which includes "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" and "The Lonesome West," both previously seen in New York). Like the others, it is permeated by violence, decay, death, and humor—humor that, in this case, is predominantly of the patronizing, stage-Irish variety and saturated in alcohol. Gordon Edelstein directed. (3/5/01) (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

STARMITES 2001
A revival of the 1989 sci-fi comic-book musical by Barry Keating and Stuart Ross. Mr. Keating is the director. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 206-1515. Closes April 8.)

STONES IN HIS POCKETS
In Marie Jones's comedy, set in an Irish village during the filming of a big Hollywood movie, Seán Campion and Conleth Hill portray all the characters. Ian McElhinney is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE SYRINGA TREE
A tour-de-force solo drama, written by and starring Pamela Gien, a South African native and first-time playwright, who gives an extraordinary performance in all twenty-three roles. It's a love story, really, about the strong, lasting bond between a white girl and her black nanny in South Africa during apartheid. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
As Marjorie Taub, an Upper West Side culture vulture on the verge of a nervous breakdown, the dexterous Linda Lavin makes Charles Busch's satire of New York intellectual angst dazzle. In her pretentiousness, however, she is a gaudy incarnation of the boulevard's contempt for ideas. In this piece of slick flimflam, there is attitude but no character, laughter but no insight, action but no plot, suffering but no pain. What we have here, in other words, is a Broadway hit. (3/20/00) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

TEN UNKNOWNS
In Jon Robin Baitz's cunning and elegant play, Donald Sutherland portrays Malcom Raphelson, a hard-drinking seventy-two-year-old figurative painter, who has been holed up in retreat from the art world for twenty-eight years, and Justin Kirk his shaggy, mordant assistant, a "past master in squandered gifts," who is taking a break from "heroin, Ecstasy, show people" to babysit the artist and keep him working. Sutherland's blocked artist, suddenly faced with the prospect of a retrospective and looming fame, raises fascinating issues about symbiosis and envy. Thanks to the marvellous cast (which includes Julianna Margulies and Denis O'Hare), the unassuming authority of Daniel Sullivan's direction, and Baitz's own deft storytelling, the audience is conned into sympathizing with Raphelson the same way that the envious trick themselves into not seeing their own vicious feelings. (3/19/01) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes April 15.)

THEATRE OF LIGHT
After a while, the themeless pieces in Rudi Stern's symphony of light, puppetry, and sound (his designs in the nineteen-sixties accompanied Timothy Leary's Psychedelic Celebrations and concerts by the Doors) become repetitive. But when all their elements come together the effect is undeniably entrancing. (Flamboyan Theatre, Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St., between Delancey and Rivington Sts. 279-4200. Closes April 14.)

UP AGAINST THE WIND
New York Theatre Workshop presents a rap-poetry play about the life of Tupac Shakur, written by Michael Develle Winn. (79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

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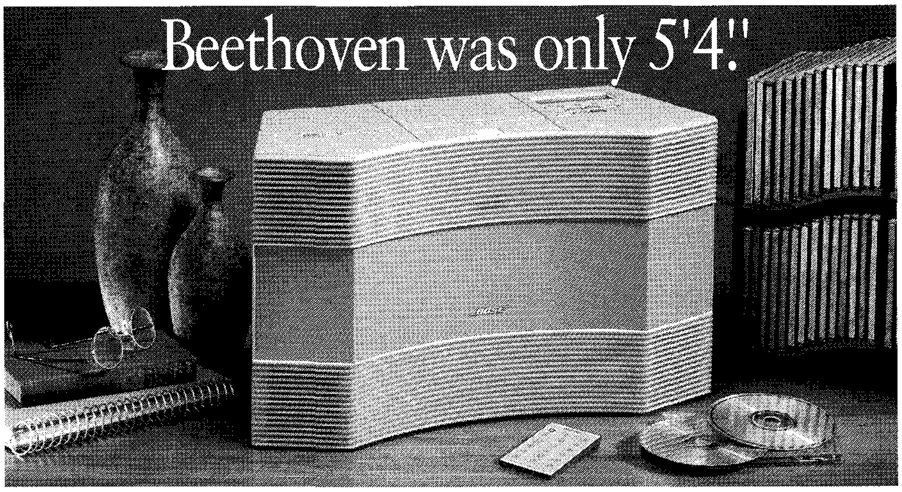

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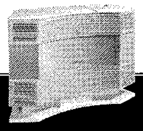

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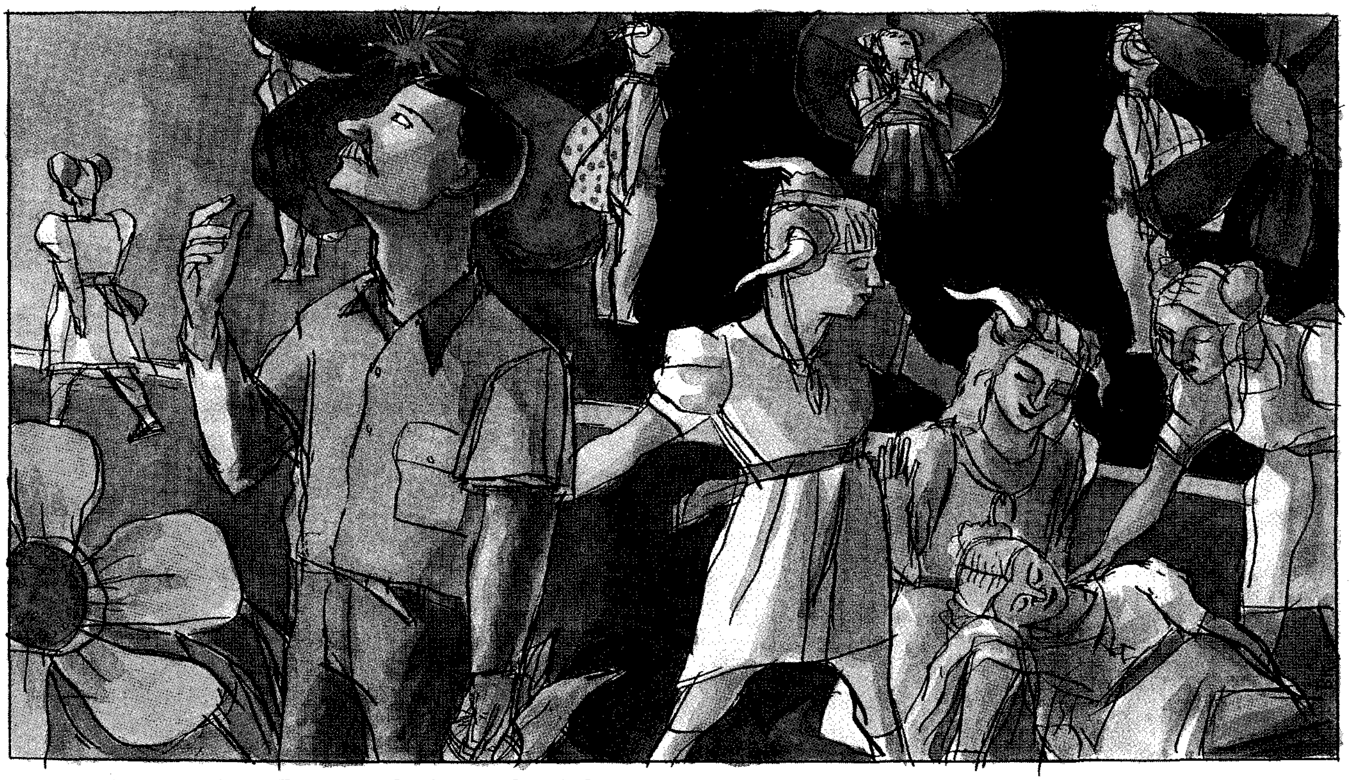
LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.
ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.
BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.
CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.
CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.



"Jennie Richee," a Ridge Theatre production, at the Kitchen.

BEN KATCHOR

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.
THE DINNER PARTY
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.
THE FANTASTICKS
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.
FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE FULL MONTY
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.
FULLY COMMITTED
Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.
KISS ME, KATE
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
THE MUSIC MAN
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.
PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.
TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY
Occasionally, the nearly fifty-year-old company reprises dances from its first decades. This season one of the revivals is "Summerspace," created in the sultry summer of 1958 at Connecticut College in a huge, empty parlor that overlooked a shady lawn. "The dance is supposed to look serene, airy, light—lyric. It's one of what we called 'Merce's nature pieces,'" says Carolyn Brown, Cunningham's principal dance partner from 1953 to 1973. The choreographer doesn't believe that his dances require explanation—they stand by themselves and in the moment. But on this occasion, he offered one of his inspirations for the regular and unexpected exits and entrances that mark his work. "He talked about birds flying through," Brown says. "They're everywhere, but you only see what you see in your part of the sky." Besides "Summerspace," the company presents the new "Way Station," "RainForest," from 1968, and the recent "Interscape," and "Biped." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. April 4-6 at 8, April 7 at 2 and 8, and April 8 at 2.)

ELIOT FELD/BALLET TECH
The company, one of the co-founders of the Joyce Theatre, returns for its spring season, performing eighteen repertory works in five weeks, with guest appearances by Damian Woetzel, Donlin Foreman, and Buffy Miller. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. April 3-6 at 8, April 7 at 2 and 8, and April 8 at 2. Through April 22.)

"SEVERAL TRUTHS"
"If you are without context, we really see more clearly who you are," the choreographer Gina Gibney contends. Her evening-length dance is a study in spareness: one woman teeters on an imaginary tightrope. Two others dodge and feint but end up in an embrace that tightens into a vise. A fourth strokes her own arm soothingly and looks out over our heads. Gibney says, "I wanted to create a scenario where the interactions that happened between people and with oneself were absolutely essential, really all there was." (Duke Theatre, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. April 4-6 and April 8 at 8 and April 7 at 3 and 8.)

ANNA MYER & DANCERS
The Boston-based choreographer Myer and her twelve-member troupe present three works, "Italian Love Duet," "Variations on the Theme" (the theme is excerpted from Bach's "Die Kunst der Fugue"), and "Angle of Repose." (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 5-8 at 8:30.)

RAMOS DANCE
The choreographer Chris DC Ramos offers three works: "Shhh," a piece about couples growing silent in the aftermath of abuse, "Lost," a duet performed by Tony Guglietti and Ricky Santiago, and "Offering to J. S. Bach." (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-0077. April 5-8 at 9.)

"DANCING ACROSS CULTURES"
Three companies from the Bronx close the second annual Bronx on Stage festival. April 4 at 2: Mask Dance Company (M'Wezi Africa). ♦ April 6 at 8: Danel & Maria Tango Company and Eddie Torres Dance Company. (Lovinger Theatre, Lehman College, 250 Bedford Park Blvd. W., the Bronx. 718-960-8833.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"LOSER'S LOUNGE"
The career of Harry Nilsson, the silver-throated pop singer, underrated songwriter, and running buddy of John Lennon's who died in 1994, is a natural for review by Joe McGinty and the Loser's crew. Nilsson was prolific, he worked in a multitude of styles, and he built humor and good cheer into even his most melancholy compositions. Expect pure pop ("Everybody's Talkin'"), power ballads ("Without You"), goofy novelty ("Coconut"), rude rock ("You're Breaking My Heart"), and, one hopes, more than a touch of Schmilsson in the night. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. April 4-5 at 8 and April 5-6 at 9. Through April 14.)

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
This triple bill of jazz, salsa, and klezmer celebrates the musical melting pot of New York City as it honors three ageless veterans—**Clark Terry,** the octogenarian brass virtuoso and indispensable Ellington teammate, **Ray Barretto,** the conga master and Latin-music visionary, and **David Amram,** the gleefully eclectic multi-instrumentalist and composer who will be leading his Middle Eastern trio. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. April 5 at 8.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
The pianist **Marcus Roberts,** who will be offering a solo recital here, has jettisoned much of the self-conscious historicism that once made his playing stiff, and the loosening up has done his stuff a world of good. Listening to him is no longer like attending a Jazz 101 lecture. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. April 6 at 8.)

PATTI LABELLE
One of the original soul/funk divas, Lady Marmalade is still belting out those high notes. She may have ditched the proto-glam finery of her seventies heyday, but odds are she'll still pose that age-old query "Voulez-vous couchez avec moi, ce soir?" (Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. April 8 at 8.)

COLDPLAY
Following in a long line of bands from the Smiths to Oasis, Coldplay is yet another British next big thing out to redraw the lines on the great pop map. Ditching extraneous gimmicks and garb, Coldplay performs earnest, straightforward songs with an emotive nod to the late American rocker Jeff Buckley. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. April 9 at 8.)

PAPA ROACH
Pairing the requisite hip-hop-informed rhythms and rap cadences with heavy-metal power chords, these four black-clad Californians seek to provide the soundtrack to every underage skateboarder's inner frustration. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. April 9 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—April 7: **Francis M'bappe,** a Cameroon native who moved to New York three years ago, has played bass with some of the biggest names in African music. With his FM Tribe band (here April 7) he brings to life the joyful rhythms of his homeland.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—April 4: **Arab Strap.** Named after a marital aid, this Scottish duo practice a bizarre brand of mostly acoustic, half-sung, half-narrated melancholia. Their songs are almost exclusively about bad sex, bad relationships, bad days, and bad drugs. Leave your dancing shoes at home. April 5: **Semisonic** narrowly escaped the pastures of one-hit-wonderland (thanks to the good graces of several prominent rock critics), and now this lucky but ultimately edgeless alternative-rock trio is back to prove that 1998's anthem "Closing Time" wasn't a fluke. April 6: **Amy Ray and the Butchies.** Boasting a backing band with a proudly cheeky moniker, the brunette half of the Indigo Girls takes a turn on her own with songs from her solo album, the punk-rock influenced "Stag." April 7: **Leftover Salmon** performs what it calls "poly-ethnic cajun slamgrass." April 10: **Spacehog.** While some may credit this band's inexplicable endurance (despite not having a hit since their début single, "In the Meantime," back in 1995) to the founding brothers Royston and Anthony Langdon's penchant for celebrity girlfriends (Royston was recently engaged to Liv Tyler), this quartet of glittery British expats is back with a new album, "The Hogyssey," to remind us that glammed-out pop à la David Bowie's "Hunky Dory" never goes out of style.

CBGB & OMFUG
315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—A narrow, graffiti-strewn cave packed every evening with new and used bands. ♦ Next door, at CB's Gallery, **33Hz** stops by on April 7. This Brooklyn fivesome makes bass-heavy music that calls to mind a cross between between UB40 and Steely Dan.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S.
73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—April 7: Detroit's **André Williams,** a.k.a. Mr. Rhythm, started rapping in the age of transistor radios; since the late fifties he's been sweating out a strange body of funky music.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—April 10: **Amy Correia,** a young singer-songwriter with a soft, fragile voice reminiscent of Mary Lou Lord and Victoria Williams, stops by with songs from her début album, "Carnival Love." The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 10: **Frank Black and the Catholics.** Black is the former leader of the dear, departed Pixies. On his latest release, "Dog in the Sand," he reaches back into the archives of rock and roll, where he finds banjos, organ, and pedal steel guitar to augment his scratchy vocals. The effect is as invigorating as a cold shower. ♦ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—April 5: New York City native **John Hammond** has been keeping country blues alive for nearly forty years. His latest album, "Wicked Grin," is comprised of Tom Waits covers, and it is one of Hammond's best efforts in years.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—April 7: The almost unbearably earnest singer **Jeb Loy Nichols** is a native Midwesterner who lives in London. Although he's interested in reggae and recorded part of his latest solo record, "Just What Time It Is," in Jamaica, Nichols plays music more evocative of James Taylor than of Bob Marley.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—April 6: The forty-nine-year-old Brazilian guitarist **Vinicius Cantuária** spent the early part of his career writing songs for such superstar compatriots as Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa. For the past six years, though, he's lived in New York City, rubbing elbows with a radical set of musicians, including Bill Frisell, Arto Lindsay, David Byrne, and Laurie Anderson. As a result his bossa nova has an avant-garde edge, but it never loses its quiet power.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—April 6: **Andrew Bird's Bowl of Fire.** The classically trained violinist Bird, a frequent collaborator with the Squirrel Nut Zippers, stops by with his acoustic quartet, which mixes folk, rock, lieder, and New Orleans jazz, all bound together with Bird's agile wit.

WETLANDS
161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—April 10-11: A veritable punk-rock old-timer's night. The revered guitarist Ron Asheton (formerly of Iggy & the Stooges) and the beloved ex-Minutemen bassist Mike Watt back up ex-Dinosaur Jr. mainstay guitar disemboweller J. Mascis in his new band, the **Fog.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through April 21: **Julie Wilson,** the doyenne of New York's chanteuses, is in the midst of a four-week run dedicated to the songs of Dorothy Fields and Amanda McBroom. Dining.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—April 5-7: The trio of the pianist **Paul Bley,** the bassist **Gary Peacock,** and the drummer **Paul Motian** may not play together on a regular basis, but you'd never know it from their musical telepathy. Then again, working as a team on and off for close to forty years can't help but foster a certain amount of familiarity. These guys can swing with the best of them, yet their true métier is tempoless group interplay that

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pushes both standards and originals right to the brink of free, if disciplined, improvisation. The quiet intensity of their compact, concentrated sets can be exhilarating. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through April 8: The **Chuck Loeb** Band. The popular smooth-jazz guitarist will be joined by some notable guests for this engagement, including the keyboardist **Bob James** on the first two evenings and the saxophonists **Kim Waters** on the 5th, **Michael Brecker** on the 6th and 7th, and **Walter Beasley** on the final night.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through April 7: The unstoppable veteran **Rosemary Clooney** doesn't consider herself a genuine jazz singer, but that doesn't stop her from swinging away most of the competition. This premier interpreter of the Great American Songbook will be backed by the Big Kahuna and the Copa Cat Pack, Hawaii's reigning neo-swing ensemble.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through April 8: The **Kenny Barron** quintet. One of the heroes of modern-jazz piano, Barron is also a thoughtful bandleader whose formidable ensembles set off his own cunning keyboard excursions. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through April 8: The **Sonny Fortune** quartet. A quadruple threat who has mastered the tenor, alto, and soprano saxophones as well as the flute, Fortune is a veteran always worth checking up on. Mondays in April, the **Howard Fishman** quartet stops by with its passionate and cunning take on traditional swing. Dining.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—April 6-7: Although a "Night of the Cookers" Reunion Band is necessarily missing a vital ingredient—the late, sorely missed trumpeter Lee Morgan—enough of the original participants are still with us to give this evening a nostalgic shine, including the trumpeter **Freddie Hubbard** (who appears only on April 7), the saxophonist **James Spaulding,** and the pianist **Ronnie Matthews.** This time around, though, the serious jousting is likely to come from such younger guests as the saxophonist **Craig Handy** and the trumpeter **David Weiss.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through April 8: The **Bobby Hutcherson** quartet. It took Hutcherson to translate the modernist grammar of sixties jazz onto the vibraphone. He's at his best when he glides into the spare, mysterious ruminations he perfected on classics like Eric Dolphy's "Out to Lunch," but he also loves to display his piston-mallet technique on up-tempo chargers. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

POP NOTES

THE TROUBLE INSIDE

Even in an age of cheerily choreographed pop music, disconsolate men with guitars still find a way to make their voices heard.

"Old Ramon" (Sub Pop), the new release from Mark Kozelek's Red House Painters, was recorded three years ago for the now defunct Island Records imprint Supreme. While Kozelek struggled to rescue the record from limbo, he kept himself busy recording two delicate solo albums, including "What's Next to the Moon," an acoustic reworking of early AC/DC songs which was released this past January. "Old Ramon," however, is a rock record, full of buzzing guitar tones that can make you feel like a raw wound when the gauze is being changed. Kozelek hangs on each word like a kid on the verge of tears: "Fill the void in me now, smile down on me." Unfortunately, Kozelek's pain is omnipresent, and many of the tracks have the same numbing effect.

After the violent post-punk angst of the Birthday Party and an introspective solo career marked by heroin addiction and heartbreak, Nick Cave, rock's prodigal son, returns with **"No More Shall We Part"** (Mute). In such songs as "Hallelujah," "God Is in the House," and "Oh My Lord," he sounds dangerously close to being born again. But he's not necessarily happy about it. On the fifth track, "Fifteen Feet of Pure White Snow," for example, Cave disrupts the calm of the title with a desperate choral exhortation to "save yourself." Only the angelic harmonizing of Kate and Anna McGarrigle, who are heard throughout the album, gives us reason to hope for deliverance.

Lloyd Cole worked on the material for his latest solo effort, **"The Negatives"** (March), over the past few years here in New York City, playing small downtown bars in relative obscurity. This relaxed atmosphere has been good for him and his band, which features Jill Sobule on guitar and backing vocals. The group shines brightly enough to bring a warm energy to the darkly romantic lyrics.

—John J. Donohue

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—A century ago, the Reverend Elias Magoon donated a hoard of paintings by William Trost Richards, the celebrated landscape painter, to the young Metropolitan Museum. When the vogue for Richards subsided, the museum deaccessioned all but nine of the original works. Now, in a spasm of institutional contrition, it has mounted a small Richards retrospective. One hopes to love it, but Richards's scrupulous, drab romanticism doesn't make it easy. The most enchanting works are his pencil studies of vegetation and a group of casual, Polaroid-size paintings enclosed in letters to a patron. Prosaic subjects seem to suit Richards. When he paints rocky surf at twilight, he's hamstrung by romantic clichés; when he paints a cow pond at noon, his subtlety shines. Through May 13. ♦ An exhibition devoted to the art of the poet William Blake includes drawings, paintings, and prints. Through June 24. ♦ **"The Treasury of the Basel Cathedral"** features seventy-five objects, most from the eleventh through the sixteenth centuries—the emphasis is on jewel-encrusted gold and silver, but there are also assorted textiles, prayer books, and a handsome pair of embellished doors with ironwork as fine as filigree. Through May 27. ♦ With fifteen paintings by Vermeer (and a possible sixteenth, "Young Woman Seated at a Virginal," which has his luminously impersonal touch), five by the tragically short-lived Fabritius, who may have been his teacher, and ten by his great rival De Hooch, **"Vermeer and the Delft School"** offers an encyclopedic look at the milieu that formed the calmest genius of the seventeenth century. This is the Met at its best: a stately procession of masterpieces, accompanied by informative, sometimes tart commentary. Through May 27. ♦ **"Correggio and Parmigianino: Master Draftsmen of the Renaissance."** Through May 6. ♦ **"Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Chinese Painting."** Through Aug. 19. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Andreas Gursky's radiant, mural-size color photographs depict the patterned world (an unusually straight stretch of the Rhine, balconies stretching up and down a hotel atrium as far as the camera can see) and the lines people make in the landscape (a tiny cable car moving through the mist; a wide, regular stream of skiers traversing an otherwise empty winter scene). Through May 15. ♦ **"Van Gogh's Postman: The Portraits of Joseph Roulin."** Through May 15. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"The Global Guggenheim"** offers a selection of two hundred paintings and sculptures from the far-flung collection, normally housed in museum branches and partner institutions in Berlin, Bilbao, Venice, and St. Petersburg. Through April 22. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"BitStreams"** offers works of art that take advantage of digital technology in various ways, from Jeremy Blake's digital animation and Leah Gilliam's installation of outmoded Macs to works like Jon Klima's "Ecosystem," which shows stock-market fluctuations as branching trees, and gold prices as birds that flock to their shelter. Through June 10. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (849-8300)—A delightful show, **"Aluminum by Design: Jewelry to Jets,"** proves there's more to aluminum than foil. When a process for extracting the metal was introduced in France in 1854, it was a solution without a problem, used mostly for decorative arts—check out the romping cherubs in a centerpiece designed by Charles Christofle for Napoleon. But as the price of aluminum fell it found more practical applications, evidenced here by an early set of Swiss surgical instruments. By the middle of the twentieth century, the metal was used for everything from vacuum cleaners to meat slicers to Airstream trailers. And lest foil get short shrift there are video clips of nineteen-fifties and sixties commercials extolling its virtues. Through July 15. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
583 Broadway (219-1222)—The controversial Los Angeles artist Paul McCarthy does primal work notorious for its gross-out factor (Vaseline, ketchup, and mayo are used to nauseating effect) and taboo subjects (incest and bestiality, to name just two). Much of this retrospective is like castor oil—hard to stomach, but good for you. Through May 13. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

GROLIER CLUB
47 E. 60th St. (838-6690)—At the time of his death, in 1971, Martin Bodmer had a collection of more than a hundred and sixty thousand books and manuscripts in his Bibliotheca Bodmeriana. Those here, on display in the United States for the first time, range from a primitively powerful Sumatran book of magic, written and illustrated on bark, to an exhaustively worked printer's proof of Proust's "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu," showing changes to the title, subtitle, setting, and first line—and that's just at the top of the page. The curators suggest that viewers transport themselves back in time by imagining the maps Columbus had on hand or envisioning a world without the brothers Grimm, but such notes are unnecessary. This is the kind of intellectual treasure which Indiana Jones and A. S. Byatt characters chew through scenery for, and it's hard not to be seduced. Through April 28. (Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

NICK BLOSSER
These small landscapes feel appealingly woozy. The planes of the earth sway and lurch, branches reach unsteadily toward clouds, leaves wilt like sleepy fingers. You get the feeling Blosser has spent more time remembering Burchfield, Blakelock, and Milton Avery than looking at actual trees and meadows. Folk-artiness looms, but a few pictures

MICHAEL WELDON

have a kind of eerie vigor: they are views you might see after walking unsteadily to the window in the midst of a high fever. Through April 14. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 861-7338.)

GERALDO DE BARROS / LYGIA PAPE
This show pairs two pioneers of Brazilian modernism. De Barros was influenced by Constructivism, and he invoked photography, as Moholy-Nagy did, to refute realism. In a series of photographs from the nineteen-forties and fifties, he manipulated multiple exposures to obliterate spatial perspective, so a train station in Sao Paolo is transformed into a herringbone-patterned grid. Ten years later, Pape brought a playful sense of the body into her geometric abstractions, literally: in 1959, she put dancers into red cubes and white cylinders and choreographed a piece that was revived (and videotaped) last year. Through May 6. (The Americas Society, 680 Park Ave., at 68th St. 249-8950.)

SUZAN FRECON
An unrepentant but quirky minimalist, Frecon paints matte or lustrous "L" shapes that interrupt smooth fields of color. The six works on view here have a reserved, precious elegance, though viewers may miss the graphic volatility of the artist's improvisations on paper, which were a highlight of last year's Whitney Biennial. Through April 28. (Markey, 42 E. 76th St. 517-9892.)

JIM PETERS
The disreputable male gaze is alive and well in these painted constructions, most of which feature female nudes lounging on unmade beds in the near dark. The subject matter may sound Balthusian, but Peters's real debt is to the late Gregorie Gillespie, who invented the odd physical format in evidence here, a hybrid of Constructivist relief, photography, and painting. With their nubile icons set into smoky, dilapidated niches, Peters's works suggest prurient reliquaries. They're genuinely sexy, but one misses Gillespie's more macabre, conflicted voyeurism. Through May 19. (CDS, 76 E. 79th St. 772-9555.)

Short List

JEAN DUBUFFET
Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.
Through April 28.

NEIL JENNEY
Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.
744-2313. Through April 13.

BRUCE NAUMAN
Zwirner and Wirth, 32 E. 69th St.
517-8677. Through April 14.

LIBRADO ROMERO
Gallery@49, 322 W. 49th St. 767-0855.
Through April 30.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

ELLEN GALLAGHER
The artist continues her uneven progress as a master of piquant, big-scale abstract pictures. On a ten-foot-tall canvas she calls "They Could Still Serve," blue-lined notepaper sheets, arranged in her familiar grid, are saturated with pinks, creams, and, in one case, a plangent lavender, all overlaid with drizzled orangish glue and tiny painted eyes that gaze askance. It's alarmingly beautiful. Another winner, "Bling Bling," embeds a cascade of minuscule cutout shapes in a rubbery, powerfully sensual black medium. But other works seem almost calculated to fail, with arbitrary images imposed on delicately touchy fields that are allergic to them. It's as if Gallagher were demonstrating life-or-death power over her pictures by publicly killing one now and then. Through April 14. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.)

Short List

GARY HUME
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.
Through April 21.

RAY JOHNSON
Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.
Through April 21.

MARIA MARSHALL
Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219. Through April 14.

JOHN POWERS
Rodgers, 529 W. 20th St. 414-9810.
Through April 7.

JIM SHAW
Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.
Through April 21.

TERRY WINTERS
Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through
April 28. See also Downtown—Short List.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

PAUL LAFFOLEY
The vivid, diagrammatic paintings in this mini-retrospective (the earliest painting was finished in 1968) look like they might be Tibetan mandalas by way of the "X-Files." The artist refers to his process as "portaling," and each canvas is meant to offer access to an alternate reality. Laffoley cites a mind-boggling array of sources, from Plato to Newton to Timothy Leary. The rush of visual and textual information is beyond breakneck. Through April 21. (Kent, 67 Prince St. 966-4500.)

TAKASHI MURAKAMI
Mycology meets Japanese *manga* in superflat paintings of cartoon toadstools cavorting on silver backgrounds. Murakami hints at a dark side to his happy, trippy world in the large, seven-panel centerpiece of the show: clusters of small fungi quiver at the base of a massive mushroom with fanglike shards protruding from its gills. Through April 14. (Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9889.)

MANFRED PERNICE
This young German artist specializes in sculptural installations based on books or oral histories. Here he takes inspiration from Joseph Conrad's "Victory," an island tale about the travails of love and the toll that isolation takes. Two scuffed-up wooden crates sit side by side on the gallery floor, connected by a small wooden cylinder. (The crates are simultaneously the material and its means of transportation—the show was shipped from Germany in them.) Remnants of blue carpet circle the installation like a shopworn stage set of the sea. The mood is both hermetic and heartrending. Through April 21. (Kern, 558 Broadway. 965-1706.)

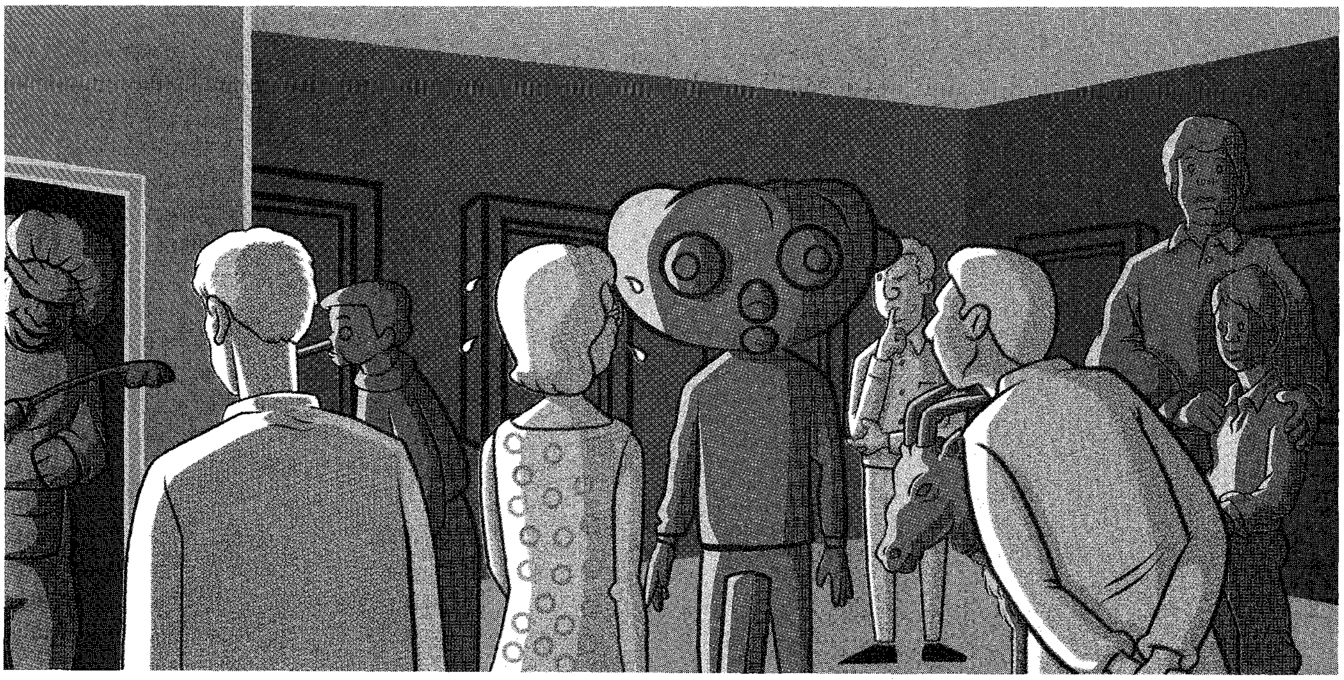
Short List

PAUL MC CARTHY
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through April 7. See also Museums.

TERRY WINTERS
Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St.
965-0753. Through April 28. See also
Chelsea—Short List.

AUCTIONS & ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
April 4 at 10:15 A.M.: Fine carpets from Europe, Central Asia, India, and China. ♦ April 5 at 6:30, April 6 at 10:30 A.M. and 2, and April 7 at 10:15 A.M.: An opulent sale of art works, furniture, porcelain, and decorative arts that belonged to the late Gianni Versace, taken from his homes in Miami and Milan and on Lake Como. The six



Paul McCarthy's sculptures and videos are on show at the New Museum of Contemporary Art.

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Please look for more New Yorker Beat events in the coming months.

hundred and one lots reveal a collector of passionate interests: there are nineteenth-century paintings of North African scenes and on themes from classical antiquity, Italian micromosaic plaques, furniture in the Empire and neoclassical styles, and an array of ormolu accessories. Some of the items were designed by Versace himself. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
April 5 at 10 A.M. and 2: European and Oriental carpets, including items from China, Persia, and Bessarabia. ♦ April 9 at 2: A sale of costume jewelry designed by Kenneth Jay Lane, with selections dating back to the nineteen-sixties. ♦ April 10 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale of watches and clocks. ♦ April 10 at 6: A single-owner collection of jewelry made in the latter half of the twentieth century. Highlights include "La Favorite," a diamond ring by Bulgari, estimated to sell for as much as five million dollars, and the "Rockefeller" Burmese sapphire. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

CHRISTIE'S EAST
April 6 at 10 A.M. and 2: Photographs by Walker Evans, Ruth Orkin, Edward S. Curtis, and many others. ♦ April 10 at 10 A.M.: Jewelry, including work by Buccellati and Cartier. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

DOYLE
April 4 at 10 A.M.: Twentieth-century art work and design. The focus of the design section is several pieces of furniture from the estate of the fashion designer Bonnie Cashin, including a plywood-and-leather armchair and ottoman by Charles and Ray Eames and a marshmallow sofa in orange wool by George Nelson. The auction also features a selection of art glass from the factories of Venini and Orrefors; paintings and other art works by such artists as Buffet, Tchelitchew, and Richard Serra; and design by Le Corbusier, Wegner (a group of teak chairs), Robert Venturi (a painted-wood cuckoo clock), and Mies van der Rohe. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN
April 5 at 10:30 A.M.: Photographic literature, including collections of work by Cartier-Bresson, Man Ray, and Czechoslovakian photographers from the nineteen-thirties and forties. ♦ April 5 at 2: Photographs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, featuring work by Berenice Abbott and Edward Weston, photographs of Marilyn Monroe, and two pictures of Pawnee Indians from 1858. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

EIKOH HOSOE
This show of several series by the postwar Japanese photographer includes his famous dopey, baroque portraits of Yukio Mishima, but "Kamaitachi," said to trace boyhood memories of wartime evacuation, is more interesting. A long-haired male figure in traditional clothes makes an appearance, clowning as bemused women and children look on—it's really an energetic record of the arrival of the freaky sixties in staid Japan. Through April 21. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

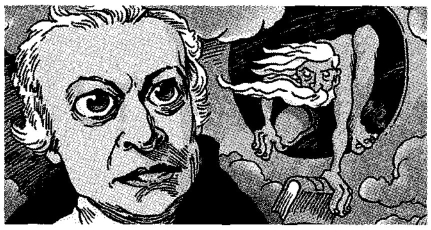
WOLS
Wols, born Alfred Otto Wolfgang Schulze, moved from Germany to Paris in 1932, where he fused the direct observational language of his indigenous New Objectivity with French Surrealism. The thirty-two vintage prints here include fashion images, portraits (two of Man Ray's girlfriend Ady, topless), and the expected photograms. The most evocative work is a set of dense but playful still-lifes from the late thirties, one of which places a skinned rabbit alongside domestic props including a comb, a harmonica, and a button. Through April 21. (Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444.)

JOHN YANG
The Stevenson Gallery specializes in unusual photographic processes, but Yang isn't here because his work is a novelty—it's just good. It was his subject matter, enamelled portrait photographs from early-twentieth-century gravestones in Mount Zion Cemetery, in Queens, that qualified him.

BOOK CURRENTS

"The Author & Printer W Blake"

"I Suppose the man to be mad; but he draws very well," wrote a bewildered reader of William Blake's early illuminated books. It was a common reaction, both at the time and subsequently, but modern critics prefer to explain and contextualize the sheer oddity and impenetrability of much of Blake's work.



TONY MILLIONAIRE

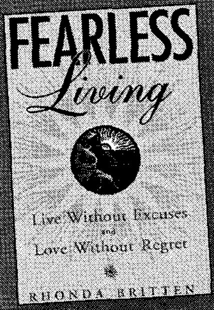
In a forthcoming biography of the poet, **THE STRANGER FROM PARADISE** (Yale), G. E. Bentley, Jr., charts Blake's transition from promising young commercial engraver to self-created visionary. Failing to find a market for his work, he became increasingly caught up with his eccentric mythological schemes and, with his adoring wife, retreated into a "community of two."

In the opening essay to **WILLIAM BLAKE** (Abrams), the catalogue for a large show that has just opened at the Met, Marilyn Butler suggests that Blake deliberately cultivated eccentricity. In the elitist world of early-nineteenth-century letters, a poet from the "lower orders" often had to present himself as naturally inspired, "more visionary than he actually was." Blake's decision to engrave, color, and print his works himself arose from a conviction that he could make more money doing that than by publishing through the regular channels. He miscalculated; a friend, after an 1814 visit, famously reported him "still poor still Dirty."

Now, however, Blake's illuminated volumes are among the rarest and most prized books in the world. **WILLIAM BLAKE: THE COMPLETE ILLUMINATED BOOKS** (Thames & Hudson) gives his works a larger audience than even their author could have dreamed of. As mysterious faces and figures peer out from amid the lettering, one feels that Blake ultimately created a medium that was as extravagant and bizarre as his message.

—Leo Carey

SELF-IMPROVEMENT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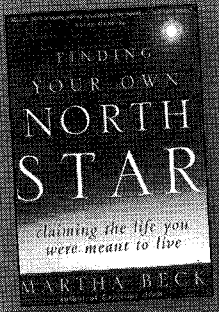
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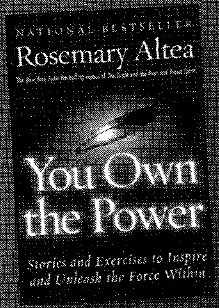
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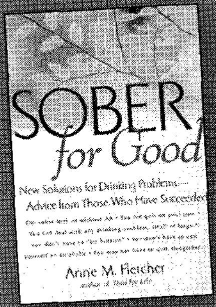
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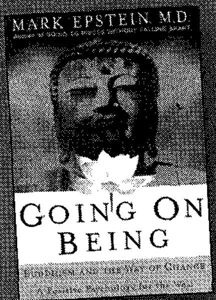
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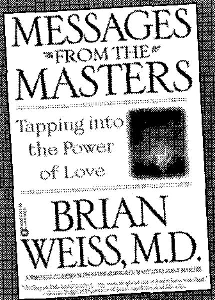
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His black-and-white prints reveal every crack and chip on the medallions that were to bestow immortality on their subjects, and, in many cases, show so much fading that only the retouching done at the time the images were made—creating ghostly sweeping hair, wide eyes, Cupid's-bow lips—is left on the glazed surface. An eight-foot-long panorama suggests that the cemetery and its surroundings, once pastorally suburban, are similarly changed. Through April 21. (Stevenson, 338 W. 23rd St. 352-0070.)

"CONSTRUCTION/DESTRUCTION"
The good news is that the tragic demolition of the old Pennsylvania Station gave rise to New York's Landmarks Preservation Commission, which makes it much harder to destroy architectural history now. The bad news is on display here. Peter Moore (1932-93) captured the station's gilded opulence before and during its untimely end, in a stark black-and-white that suits his subject perfectly. Curiously, his most bracing images record the early stages of destruction, when commuters were moving through unfazed—one shows a serene-looking family marching out of a destroyed archway covered with a huge canvas shroud. Toward the end, the scene begins to resemble bombed-out Dresden, with heavenly beams of light illuminating bulldozers and great mounds of rubble. A recently discovered cache of uncredited photographs of the construction of Grand Central Station is also on show. Through May 12. (DeLellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

"NIGHTLIFE"
This batch of black-and-white nighttime images from New York, London, Paris, Moscow, and beyond, from the nineteen-twenties through the millennium's eve, offers a generous but arbitrary selection of nocturnal subjects. High-contrast Times Square marquees hang in close company with Arthur Rickerby's well-dressed ladies prostrating themselves before Robert Frost at the 1962 Nobel Prize dinner. Viewers may regret the lack of work from the seventies or the absence of masters like Roy DeCarava, but there are a few pieces from the lonelier corners of the night—in one almost entirely black Weegee scene, the picture's only puddle of light holds a lonely Cinderella figure, scrubbing the long, dark floor of an office building. Through April 15. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
The three shows at I.C.P.'s Midtown space, Kiki Smith's reinterpreted fairy tales, Hans Bellmer's ever-reassembled dolls, and a collection of Victorian daguerreotype portraits of male friends—some of whom look to modern eyes like couples—share a somewhat roundabout approach to intimacy. They stake out the territory between coy and explicit, somewhere near suggestive. All shows through June 10. (1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

OLIVER BOBERG
Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752.
Through April 28.

CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI / JEFF WALL
Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.
Through April 14.

KATE BREAKEY
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 627-2410.
Through April 21.

SIMEN JOHAN
Gallery 24, 552 W. 24th St. 414-0370.
Through April 14.

ANNETTE LEMIEUX
McKee, 745 Fifth Ave. 688-5951.
Through April 14.

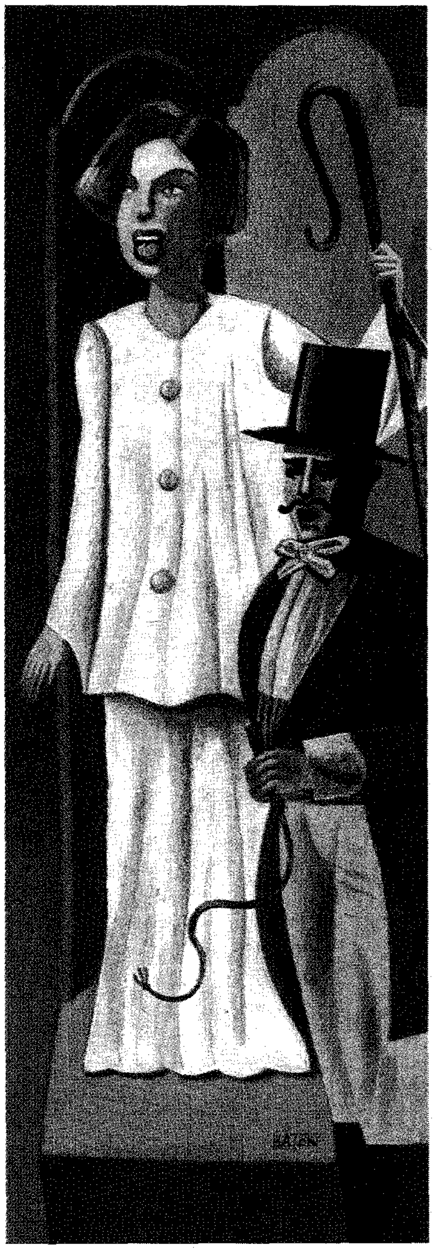
CHARLIE WHITE
Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.
Through April 7.

See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Temur Chkheidze's new production of Prokofiev's **"The Gambler"** (now in its final performances) is a riveting entertainment from the first note to the last. All the necessary elements are present: a strong, mostly Russian cast (including Elena Obraztsova as the noble grandmother and Vladimir Galouzine as the demented gambler Alexei); sets and costumes that mix the luxurious with the bizarre; and an orchestra, led by Valery Gergiev, that can bring both lustre and grit to the composer's relentless accompaniment. (April 4 at 8 and April 8 at 8:30.) ♦ The last performance of **"Il Trovatore,"** with Michele Crider, Irina Mishura, Richard Margison, Valery Alexeev, and Dimitri Kavrakos; Carlo Rizzi. (April 5 at 7:30.) ♦ The last performance of Elijah Moshinsky's new production of Verdi's **"Nabucco,"** with Maria Guleghina, Wendy White, Juan Pons, and Samuel Ramey; James Levine. (April 6 at 8.) ♦ Otto Schenk's production of **"Parsifal"** returns to the repertory, with Violeta Urmana, Plácido Domingo, Hans-Joachim Ketelsen, Ekkehard Wlaschiha, and John Tomlinson; James Levine. (April 7 at noon.) ♦ With Richard Paul Fink replacing Wlaschiha. (April 10 at 6:30.) ♦ The season première of Berg's **"Lulu,"** a return of the Met's 1977 production. In previous seasons, the title role in this lurid Expressionist masterpiece proved to be a fine vehicle for the talents of Teresa Stratas and Julia Migenes; now the radiant German soprano Christine Schäfer, who has triumphed as Lulu at Glyndebourne and Salzburg, makes her Met début. James Levine conducts. (April 9 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)



Christine Schäfer débuts in "Lulu" at the Met beginning April 9.

OLAF HAJEK

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
The final performances of **"Tosca,"** with Amy Johnson, Alfredo Portilla, and Jeffrey Kneebone; conducted by Richard Buckley. (April 4 at 7:30 and April 7 at 1:30.) ♦ The last performance of Mark Lamos's new production of Handel's **"Acis and Galatea,"** with Christine Brandes, William Burden, John Tessier, and Dean Elzinga; Jane Glover. (April 5 at 7:30.) ♦ In his new production of **"La Bohème,"** the director James Robinson gets all the little things right: we may never quite buy his updating of the work to the beginning of the First World War, but he certainly knows how to move people around a stage. This performance inaugurates a new cast, including Elizabeth Blancke-Biggs, Shelley Jameson, Gerard Powers, and Michael Corvino; Gerald Steichen. (April 6 at 8.) ♦ **"Don Giovanni"** continues its run, with Sally Wolf, Oksana Krovytska, Mariateresa Magisano, David Pittsinger, Matthew Polenzani, Kevin Langan, Valerian Ruminski, and John Marcus Bindel; Steuart Bedford. (April 7 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

HENRY STREET CHAMBER OPERA
Mozart's early opera **"Il Sogno di Scipione"** has a serene setting—a Roman general dreams of encountering his forebears and a pair of goddesses in heaven—but the boy genius indulged himself in bravura vocal writing that the older Mozart, a consummate man of the theatre, would never have dared. It has never been staged in the U.S. before, but this ambitious new company has taken up the challenge. Christopher Alden stages a modern production with young American singers, conducted by Neal Goren; the venue is the intimate Harry de Jur Playhouse, a nineteenth-century jewel. (466 Grand Street. 279-4200. April 6 at 8 and April 8 at 3. Through April 15.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

CHOIR OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA
Lenten concerts are always full of Bach and Handel, but the conductor Kent Tritle takes a different approach this year, leading a concert evoking the world of seventeenth-century Vienna and Salzburg, with music by Heinrich Biber and Johann Schmelzer. The Violins of Lafayette and the Ars Antiqua Ensemble assist. (Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. April 4 at 8.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S
Czech music is flowering all over town this spring, but the contribution of Charles Mackerras will be of special note: despite his non-native status, he has conducted the repertoire with matchless style and rare insight for nearly half a century. In his last concert as the orchestra's music director, he leads music by Janáček (the String Quartet No. 1, arranged for string orchestra) and Dvořák (the Violin Concerto, with Kyoko Takezawa, and the Symphony No. 7). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 4 at 8.)

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC: "LIEBESTOD"
A program centered on the themes of love and death, with music by Purcell, Berio, Wagner, Scriabin (the "Poem of Ecstasy"), and Michael Hersch ("Umbra," a première). Robert Spano conducts. (BAM Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. April 6 at 8 and April 8 at 3.)

MUSICA SACRA
Richard Westenburg conducts Bach's Mass in B Minor. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. April 7 at 8.)

ST. MATTHEW PASSION
Jonathan Miller's acclaimed 1997 staging of Bach's sacred masterpiece, which uses an informal setting and casual dress to suggest an early Christian service,

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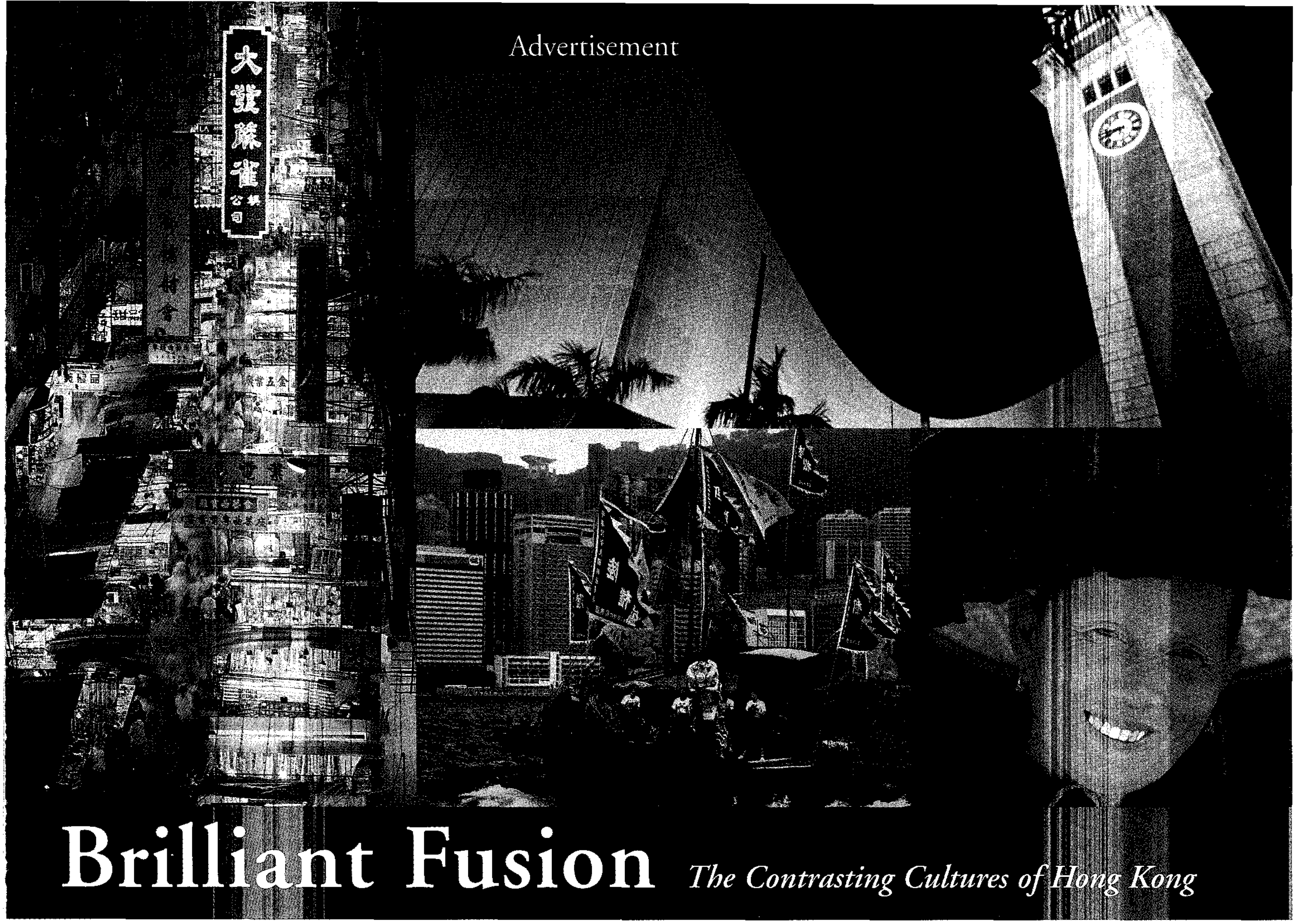


Brilliant Fusion

The Contrasting Cultures of Hong Kong

Eastern culture with a Western influence—or is it the other way around? A distinctive fusion of cultures draws visitors from around the world to Hong Kong. Now **United Airlines** offers nonstop service from New York's JFK International, and joins with **United Vacations** to connect New York with the people and places that give the City of Life its eclectic allure.

by Dara O'Brien

If we were to designate ground zero for the new global village, we might well look to Hong Kong. It is perhaps the most international city in the world, an absorbing amalgam of East and West, modern and classic, commerce and art.

Hong Kong is a modern financial center where centuries-old seafaring traditions are still practiced; where classic Buddhist temples coexist with remnants of the city's colonial past. It unites a vibrant population with a wealth of cultural influences—and five thousand years of heritage—in an extraordinary locale noted as much for its natural beauty as its stunning architectural landscape.

Museums throughout the city shed light on myriad features of its brilliant fusion. Some are intimate in scope, with specialized collections on various aspects of Hong Kong's culture including horse raising, medical sciences, or tea ware. Other, larger institutions offer a panoramic view of Hong Kong's emergence from a nascent fishing village into a high-tech metropolis. The permanent galleries of the vast **Hong Kong Heritage Museum** illuminate themes that include Prehistoric Life, Village Life, British Rule, and more. A highlight is the **Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall**, which traces the origins of this age-old form.

Important heritage sites have been faithfully restored or preserved, including ancient walled villages, the legendary **Lam Tsuen Wishing Trees**, and spiritual landmarks such as the **Chi Lin Nunnery** and the **I Shing Temple**.

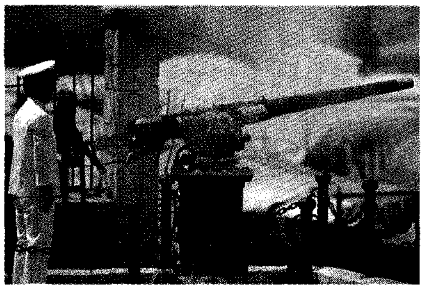
Hong Kong is also a place where the performing arts thrive—from classic Chinese traditions to the **Hong Kong Philharmonic** and **Hong Kong Ballet**. One of the best times to experience the extraordinary scope of this cultural panorama is during the annual spring **Hong Kong Arts Festival**, the city's premiere event for both local and international artists from a variety of disciplines.

It's one of the many modern and traditional festivals that is a vital part of Hong Kong's cultural life—from private rituals to more exuberant entertainments, such as **Chinese New Year,** the **Tin Hau Festival** with its customary boat parades, or the **Mid-Autumn Festival**. The winding, twirling dragon dance parades through the streets with costumed performers, musicians, and elaborate floats in a larger-than-life spectacle. The auspicious color red is everywhere from shop windows to street fashion, and sumptuous holiday feasts are the order of the day.

But then, when it comes to dining, in Hong Kong there is always reason to celebrate. This is one of the great culinary capitals of the world. With the city's more than 9,900 restaurants, just about anything one might desire is there for the tasting. The eateries of Kowloon's popular **Tsim Sha Tsui** area cover a wide range of cuisines, with a concentration of Southeast Asian and Cantonese. Central district's **Lan Kwai Fong** serves up an international mix including Middle Eastern, French, and Italian specialties. In neighboring **SoHo** ("South of Hollywood Road") tastes run from Cajun to Russian to classic Mediterranean.

All images provided courtesy of the Hong Kong Tourism Board.

In contrast to the city's revered Chinese heritage stands its British colonial legacy. A walking tour of Hong Kong Island's Central district reveals colonial gems such as the one-hundred-year-old red brick **French Mission Building**, with its simple green shutters and wrought-iron details, and the beautiful Gothic **St. John's Cathedral**. From there it's an easy stroll east to Causeway Bay for the shooting of the **Noon Day Gun**, a throwback to the celebrated pursuit of "Mad Dogs and Englishmen."



English is widely spoken in Hong Kong, and Western influences are woven into the fabric of everyday life. From its bustling markets and galleries to its fashions, not to mention theatres and concert halls, Hong Kong embraces Western traditions as a critical dimension of its cultural kaleidoscope.

Perhaps the best illumination of Hong Kong's extraordinary cultural life comes through its people. Travellers can call upon any one of a network of citizen ambassadors; local experts who are eager to share what they know about their city. Enlisted by the Hong Kong Tourism Board as part of its "Meet the People" program, they are cultural emissaries who offer an insider's view of Hong Kong.

One such emissary is **Lai Kim**, owner of the **Cheung Chau Windsurfing Centre and Outdoor Café** which overlooks the Mediterranean-style port of tiny **Cheung Chau Island**. Every Saturday at 11 A.M., he draws visitors for his discussion of the island and its landmark event, the delightful eight-day **Bun Festival**, celebrated every summer since 1777 with processions, lion dances, and colorful dress.

Explore the balance of yin and yang with **tai-chi** master **Pandora Wu**. She welcomes visitors to Kowloon's **Waterfront Promenade** for an outdoor class at 8 A.M. on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings. Tai-chi is one of the city's favorite fitness activities, and devotees can be seen practicing its fluid motions individually or en masse every morning in many of the city's public parks and promenades.

Another popular aspect of Hong Kong culture is the ritual of the Chinese tea ceremony, observed daily all over the city. At **MoonGarden Tea House**, owner **Vincent Li** teaches visitors about the intricacies of tea art. See for yourself if the ancient saying holds true: "Life is like tea. The longer it is immersed, the richer it becomes." There's an almost mystical aspect to the lore of tea in Hong Kong, and Li is a master of the craft. Regular demonstrations are given every Wednesday at 11 A.M.

Often viewed as a gateway to the East, Hong Kong is an endlessly intriguing destination in itself. The contagious energy, living history, fascinating mix of cultures, and colorful people make it one of the most engaging cities on earth—and a magnet for travellers in search of an authentically unique cultural exchange.

For more information about visiting Hong Kong, call the Hong Kong Tourism Board at (800) 282-4582 and mention code NY3, or visit www.DiscoverHongKong.com.

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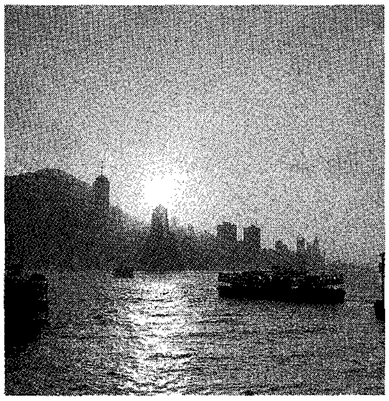

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Great Eagle Hotel
HONG KONG

returns to to the Brooklyn Academy of Music for Holy Week. The singers are Heidi Grant Murphy, Phyllis Pancella, Daniel Taylor, Paul Agnew (as the Evangelist), Richard Clement, Andrew Schroeder (as Jesus), and Stephen Varcoe; Paul Goodwin conducts the New York Collegium. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. April 8 at 3 and April 10 at 7:30. Through April 14.)

RECITALS

ROULETTE
The performance center's spring series of experimental music, held through May 17, is under way; all performances begin at 8:30. April 4: Eyvind Kang leads his acoustic ensemble in "Petrified Wood," a work based on a mandala system of harmonic tones. ♦ April 5: Compositions and improvisations from Form Feeders, a trio headed by the classical-jazz guitarist Jeffrey Schanzer. ♦ April 6: The composer-performer Jin Hi Kim plays music written for both acoustic and electric versions of the *kŏmun'go*, a Korean zither. ♦ April 7: Andrew Neumann creates solo improvisations for computer, drum machine, and real-time sampling. ♦ April 8: Composer-performer David Means presents "This World (and Then the Fireworks)," with the vocalist-violinist Wendy Ultan and the sampling artist Steve Goldstein. (228 West Broadway. 219-8242.)

BARGEMUSIC
April 5-6 at 7:30: Piano quintets by Martinů and Elgar, played by the pianist Phillip Bush, the cellist Peter Wiley, and others. ♦ April 7 at 7:30 and April 8 at 4: The pianist Diane Walsh, the violinist Peter Winograd, and others perform music by Bach, Mendelssohn, and Strauss (the Piano Quartet, an early work). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
As part of the Society's "Double Exposure" series of music by up-and-coming composers, the Miami String Quartet performs music by Jennifer Higdon, Ge Gan-Ru, and Lisa Bielawa (a première); there will be an informal reception between the two performances. (Rose Studio, 165 W. 65th St., 10th floor. 875-5788. April 5 at 6:45 and 8:30.)

ALFRED BRENDEL
The pianist presents a concert of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven (the "Diabelli" Variations). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 5 at 7:30.)

PERSPECTIVES ENSEMBLE
For centuries the music of the Gypsy people has threaded itself through the cultures of Europe, blending with local traditions while remaining a vital force on its own. In the first of two concerts, the ensemble presents classical music influenced by the Spanish Gypsy style, flamenco: Falla's "El Amor Brujo" (sung by the acclaimed *cantaora* Esperanza Fernandez) and two works by Carlos Surinach. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. April 5 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE
The Flux String Quartet performs music and multimedia works by such composers as John Zorn, Bill Viola, George Maciunas (who was the founder of the Fluxus movement), and Renaud Gagneux (the U.S. première of his String Quartet No. 2). (Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. April 7 at 8.)

AMERICAN ACCENT
The Lark Quartet is the core ensemble of this newly formed group, which offers a concert of instrumental music and songs by Ives, Gould, Messiaen, Joan Tower, and others, at Merkin Concert Hall. (129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 9 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

OVER EASY
From the peaks of the Carpathian Mountains down through the steppes east of the Dnieper River, *pysanky,* ornate Easter eggs handcrafted with beeswax and dye, have been a part of Ukrainian life since antiquity. Paul Wirhun is a Brooklyn-based artist of Ukrainian descent who has been making *pysanky* since he was a child. As an adult he's experimented with the form (he scratches and bleaches his eggs) and has shown his work at galleries in Provincetown (where he lived for eight years), New Orleans, Boston, and San Francisco. On April 7, from 2 to 6 (and the following Saturday at the same time), Wirhun will demonstrate his technique and offer a hands-on opportunity to experiment with this tradition. (Eat Here Café, 145 Sixth Ave., between Spring and Dominick Sts. No tickets necessary.)

READINGS
April 4 at 8: By the actors Lili Taylor, Daniel Alexander Jones, and Maria Tucci, from stories by Julia Alvarez, Michael Cunningham, and Elizabeth Graver which appeared in *DoubleTake* magazine. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ♦ April 4 at 8: By the novelist Jonathan Franzen and the poet Vijay Seshadri, from their work. A part of the *New Yorker* Out Loud series. (Bam Café, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4139.) ♦ April 5 at 7: By the novelist Paula Fox, from her upcoming memoir, "Borrowed Refinery." (BookCourt, 163 Court St., Brooklyn. 718-875-3677.) ♦ April 5 at 7:30: By Francisco Goldman, from his recent fiction. (Pete's Candy Store, 709 Lorimer St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. 718-302-3770.)

TABLES FOR TWO

BAYOU
308 Lenox Ave., near 125th St. (426-3800)—If Bayou were in midtown rather than in Harlem, rusty farm implements and old metal signs would hang from every surface to authenticate its Creole credentials. Instead, the place is modestly decorated with quiet black-and-white photos of southern Louisiana—a swampy back yard with willow trees, some guys in a fishing boat, the blur of a perturbed-looking crocodile—and it sits just above the brightly lit Slice of Harlem II pizza parlor. Outside you can buy socks from folding tables.

What exactly qualifies as Creole? Explanations inevitably involve a convoluted history lesson, a litany of spices and ethnic groups, and a passing mention of tomatoes. But Steven Manning (most recently of Clancy's in New Orleans) has been turning out this kind of food for more than a decade, so rather than worrying about its origins, patrons just enjoy the delicious shrimp gumbo.

Or the turtle soup—flecks of Louisiana snapping-turtle meat in a dark-brown roux flavored with sherry, lemon, clove, bay leaf, and garlic. It's a pungent, wild ride, especially after an appetizer of Manning's sautéed chicken livers with port-wine glaze and sesame seeds. The chef's invention of cornmeal-fried oysters served on sautéed spinach and smothered in melted Brie only faintly resembles oysters in the end, but it's delicious nonetheless.

The requisite shrimp Creole and crawfish étouffée both make impressive appearances, and for those who equate "Southern" with "fried" there's thin-sliced, farm-raised catfish, marinated and deep fried in cornmeal and served with hush puppies *and* French fries. The sautéed Snapper Alexandria, with roasted pecans and vanilla-lemon butter, is terrific but could be upstaged by the special on any given day—especially the sautéed sea scallops or the crispy-skin sea bass with snow peas and grits.

The Bayou Bread Pudding with bourbon sauce would seem to be the appropriate choice for dessert here, but a slice of frozen lemon pie (have a shot of Jack Daniel's if you miss the bourbon) is better, and so is the pecan brownie, served with homemade peppermint ice cream and chocolate Creole sauce. What makes the chocolate sauce Creole? Who cares? It's luscious. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner; Saturdays for dinner only; Sundays for brunch only. Entrées $13-$22.)

—*Matt Dellinger*

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MOVIES OPENING

ALONG CAME A SPIDER
Morgan Freeman returns as Detective Alex Cross in this thriller about a serial killer who preys upon the Washington, D.C., political community. Lee Tamahori directed. Opening April 6.

BEAUTIFUL CREATURES
Two friends (Susan Lynch and Rachel Weisz) hit the road after one of them takes revenge on her boyfriend in this drama directed by Bill Eagles. Opening April 6.

BLOW
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 6.

THE DAY I BECAME A WOMAN
Marzieh Meshkini directed this triptych film that tells the stories of three Iranian women—young, middle-aged, and old. In Farsi. Opening April 6.

JUST VISITING
A medieval nobleman (Jean Reno) gets transported to modern-day America in this comedy directed by Jean-Marie Poiré. With Christian Clavier and Christina Applegate. Opening April 6.

MAU MAU SEX SEX
A documentary about Dan Sonney and David Friedman, two filmmakers who pioneered the exploitation-film business in the nineteen-forties. Directed by Ted Bonnitt. Opening April 6. (Cinema Village.)

ON HOSTILE GROUND
A documentary about abortion clinics, directed by Liz Mermin and Jenny Raskin. Opening April 6. (The Screening Room.)

POKÉMON 3
Michael Haigney directed this third animated film featuring the popular pocket monsters. Opening April 6.

SHADOW MAGIC
A historical drama about an Englishman (Jared Harris) who introduces the movies to turn-of-the-century China. Directed by Ann Hu. In Mandarin. Opening April 6.

FILM NOTES

AMORES PERROS
This three-part tale, the début directorial effort of Alejandro González Iñárritu, gives you a pretty good idea of what life is like in Mexico City and leaves you with an enduring wish never to drive its streets at rush hour. The first section chronicles the near-incestuous affair between Octavio (Gael García Bernal) and his sister-in-law Susana (Vanessa Bauche). The second, which sags with weary symbolism, is about a model who loses a leg. The third and strongest tells of an ex-terrorist and tramp (Emilio Echevarría) who kills for money and dreams of love. The connective tissue between these folks is a car crash, and each of them also either owns or trains dogs. (If your taste in movies doesn't run to pooches with bloody flanks and broken necks, you should probably stay away.) Iñárritu's style carries the day; it may be heated and hectic, but he doesn't bully you into judging these frazzled figures, and, in Echevarría, he has found a figure of great and grimy nobility. In Spanish.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/2/01.) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.)

THE DISH
A pleasant, even charming, movie, but so determinedly small-scale and personal that it flirts with innocuousness. In a remote, unknown Australian town, a group of local technicians, together with an American from NASA, man a giant telescope tracking the moon shot in 1969. All sorts of embarrassing snafus occur just as the whole world is watching, and the various ambitions and jealousies of the men play into the mess. There's a touching moment when the entire town gathers around the TV to watch Neil Armstrong's first step, and they all realize that he and they have become part of history. Rob Sitch directed.—*David Denby* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

EMITAI
A 1971 film by the Senegalese writer-filmmaker Ousmane Sembene about black villagers who are pushed closer and closer to resistance by the inhuman demands of a colonial power (the French, during the Second World War). Yet they delay. Even after their women and children are rounded up and put in the sun, the men postpone taking action; they make sacrifices to their gods, hoping to learn what to do—but the gods are silent. (Emitai is the Master of Thunder.) The film deals with the interrelationships in the village between the men and the women, and between the men and their gods—and in both cases those relationships turn out to be complex, ironic, puzzling. In Wolof.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; April 9-10.)

ENEMY AT THE GATES
In the midst of the siege of Stalingrad, two snipers—an innocent Red Army peasant from the Urals (Jude Law) and an aristocratic Nazi deer hunter (Ed Harris)—stalk each other in the mucky ruins. This elaborate duel might have been perversely interesting as a kind of military sick joke if the absurdity of it were the point. But the director Jean-Jacques Annaud and his long-time collaborator, the producer-writer Alain Godard, make it seem like the entire battle hinged on the struggle between the two specialists. Although the movie starts well, with horrifying epic scenes of the Red Army sacrificing thousands of men to stop the Germans, it rapidly loses all common sense and excitement. With Joseph Fiennes as a hack Party intellectual who makes the Soviet sharpshooter a national hero and Rachel Weisz as a brave Red Army girl who seems to have walked off a recruiting poster. The composer James Horner does an acceptable imitation of Shostakovich's agonized wartime manner.—*D.D.* (3/26/01) (Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

15 MINUTES
There's life and fun in this trashy pulse-of-the-city thriller, much of which is set in and around the media pits of Times Square. Two recent émigrés kick the madness into motion—a Czech psychopath (Karel Roden), who takes the promise of American freedom with alarming literalness, and a movie-loving Russian (Oleg Taktarov), who films his partner's crimes. These two violent screwballs are pursued by a celebrated police detective (Robert De Niro) and a young fire marshall (Edward Burns). Director John Herzfeld serves up fires, knifings, and shootouts, and manages, in the midst of the extreme mayhem, to hammer away at the American habit of turning criminals into media figures. The villain of the piece is a sensationalizing newscaster (Kelsey Grammer) who puts the Russian's videos on the air. The movie is hypocritical through and through, but at least Herzfeld brings humor and rhythm to what he's doing.—*D.D.* (3/26/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Union Square.)

THE GLEANERS AND I
The French filmmaker Agnès Varda, digital camera in hand, roams around her country recording the movements of gleaners. Traditionally, as in the archetypal Millet painting, gleaners were women who gathered the remains of the harvest; their modern counterparts are mostly scavengers, searching in dumpsters and other likely places. The French, of course, give the practice a wonderfully perverse twist—many gleaners do so by choice, disdainful of wastefulness and rampant consumerism. Varda's photographic eye is much in evidence, and her narration is both shrewd and whimsical. When she leaves a camera on accidentally, she uses the unintended footage to create a "dance of the lens cap," a filmic gleaning that acts as a perfect grace note. In French.—*Michael Agger* (Film Forum.)

HEARTBREAKERS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Union Square, and Waverly.)

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE
The latest film from the talented young Hong Kong writer-director Wong Kar Wai makes us pant for adultery. In the early sixties, in a community of Shanghai refugees living in Hong Kong, Mrs. Chan (Maggie Cheung) and Mr. Chow (Tony Leung) are next-door neighbors in a friendly apartment building. The perfectly dressed and coiffed couple meet, talk, and realize that their frequently travelling spouses are off having an affair with each other. What to do? The movie is all about sensual anticipation. Nat King Cole croons on the soundtrack, and the camera caresses the rain on the streets and the texture of a stone wall in the semi-darkness. So skillfully does the director bring us to a state of breathless expectation that when he refuses to deliver the goods he almost seems to have invented a new form of perversion. In Cantonese and French.—*D.D.* (2/5/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

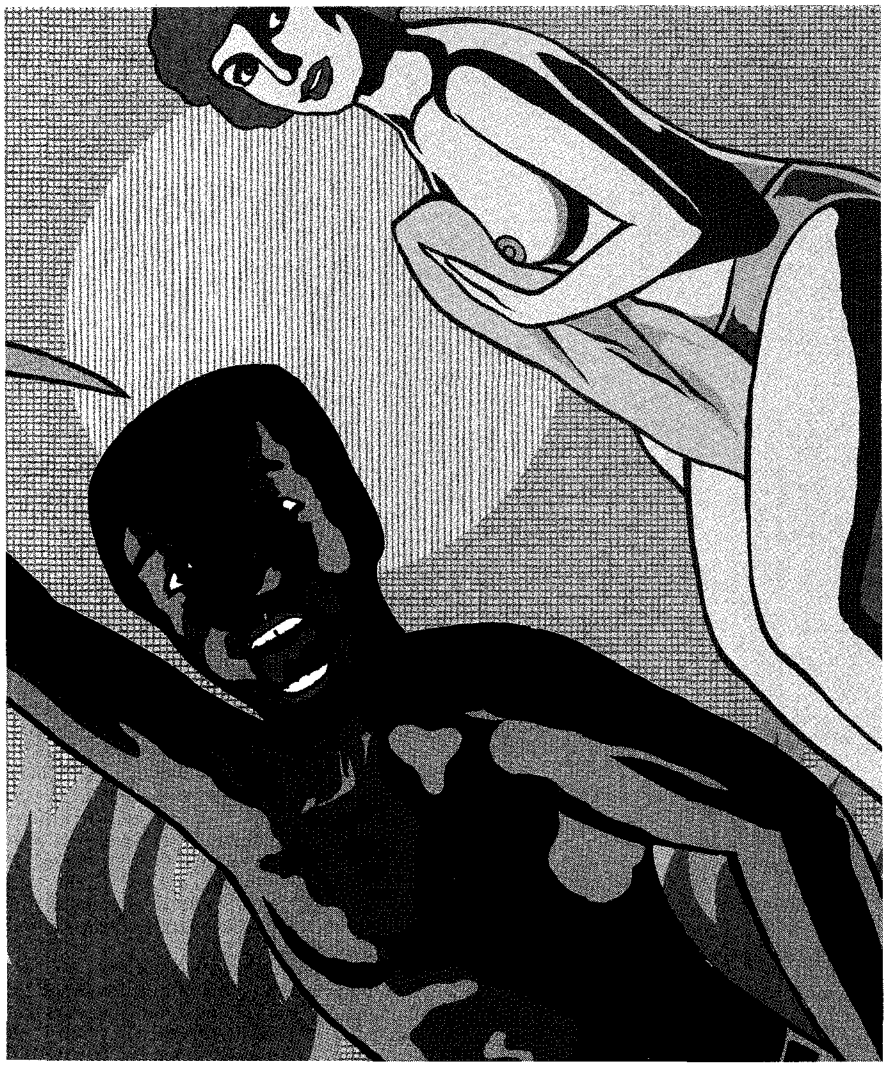
MEMENTO
Guy Pearce ("L.A. Confidential") plays Leonard, a former insurance investigator who has mislaid his short-term memory; leave the room and come back ten minutes later, and he won't remember you. To help his case, and to solve the apparent murder of his wife, Leonard tattoos himself with memoranda and drives around the lowlier districts of L.A. County. At the same time, he has a couple of acquaintances (Carrie-Anne Moss and Joe Pantoliano) who seem eager both to support Leonard and to use his condition for their own unscrupulous ends. There is a fine, despairing comedy to these events—not just in our fidgety hero, but in the constant thwarting of our need to know. After all, the solution to a whodunit is never easy when you can't even be certain what got done. The young British writer and director Christopher Nolan, who has every intention of putting us through the mill, doubles his fun by running the whole story backward. Damn him.—*A.L.* (3/19/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

THE MEXICAN
A shaggy-taco story—one of those south-of-the-border romps in which many people die in odd ways and the Mexicans are either gap-toothed cretins or unspeakably dignified grandees. Brad Pitt is Jerry, a small-time loser sent to Mexico by Los Angeles gangsters to retrieve a fabled handmade pistol; Julia Roberts is his girlfriend, Sam, who loves Jerry but is disgusted with him and flounces off to Las Vegas, where she's kidnapped by a sensitive gay hit man (James Gandolfini). Pitt and Roberts appear together only at the beginning and end of the movie and spend all their time engaging in the kind of noisy, shin-kicking squabble which must be fun to perform but does nothing for the audience.—*D.D.* (3/12/01) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Sutton 1 and 2.)

NATIONAL VELVET
One of the most likable movies of all time. Under the direction of Clarence Brown, the twelve-year-

old Elizabeth Taylor rings true on every line she speaks; she gives what is possibly her most dedicated performance as Velvet Brown, a little English girl who wins a horse in a village lottery and is obsessively determined to enter him in the Grand National. Originally released in 1944.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; April 7-8.)

POLLOCK
A dogged march through the life and work of Jackson Pollock, starting in the early nineteen-forties, when Lee Krasner (Marcia Gay Harden) first approached him in Greenwich Village, continuing through their marriage and other tempests, and ending gloomily in a car wreck in 1956. The film was directed by Ed Harris, who also plays the artist. His face doesn't much resemble that of Pollock, but Harris has mastered the hunched amble and the glaring gaze. His best scenes are not the boozy rants but the quiet times with a cigarette and a brush—or, latterly, a dripping stick. Pollock's drinking was an interruption of his art, not a spur to it, and the film can do little to connect the two; we are left with a sombre study of discontent, enlivened by the appearance of Jennifer Connelly as the painter's final girlfriend. What she saw in him, by that stage, is anybody's guess. With Val Kilmer pretending to be Willem de Kooning.—*A.L.* (3/5/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



Opening April 6, Ted Bonnitt's documentary about schlock cinema, "Mau Mau Sex Sex."

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

SAY IT ISN'T SO
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

SERIES 7
Daniel Minahan's parody of reality television shows is harsh and strident, but it's not without some very funny moments. Shot on video, it presents itself without explanation, encouraging you to feel as though you had stepped into the near future and turned on your TV. The show is called "Series 7" and the contestants, à la "The Running Man," track and kill each other on camera. What's worse (or better) is that the current champion happens to be a pregnant mother (Brooke Smith), and one of the other contestants is her former high-school flame. Minahan takes the manipulative, stagy devices of tabloid TV—along with elements of "The Real World"—and uses them to amplify the drama of his absurd premise. The film eventually trips over its own feet: it wants to play a joke on the audience ("Why are you laughing?") but also to be just a joke ("Please laugh").—*M.A.* (Village East Cinemas.)

STALAG 17
In this rowdy 1953 comedy about Americans in a German prisoner-of-war camp during the Second World War, William Holden's hair-trigger performance as the crafty, cynical heel who turns into a hero won him a new popularity, as well as the Academy Award for Best Actor. He had been a sensitive but milder actor before, and even the despairing range he demonstrated in "Sunset Boulevard" hadn't prepared audiences for the abrasive edge and distinctively American male energy he showed in this role. The melodramatics of the plot are low grade, and the material is still structured and performed like a play, but the gallows humor is entertaining, despite some rather broad roughhouse effects. Billy Wilder directed and had a hand in the adaptation, and it's a safe bet that he'd taken a long look at "La Grande Illusion."—*P.K.* (Cinema Classics; April 8-9.)

THE TAILOR OF PANAMA
A messy adaptation of the John le Carré novel, directed by John Boorman. As Andy Osnard, Pierce Brosnan plays an anti-Bond: the spy who loves nobody except himself. He is sent to Panama, where he recruits a local tailor, Harry Pendel (Geoffrey Rush)—who, like so many le Carré creations, has constructed the story of himself to escape from a shameful, secret past. On the evidence of Harry's tips, Osnard urges London and Washington to back a democratic coup to the tune of several million dollars. Almost no one in this picture is free of corruption, moral, sexual, or financial; the only virtuous character, Harry's wife, Louisa (Jamie Lee Curtis), is barely allowed room to breathe. Boorman wants to turn the novel's rueful satire into something sharp and sweaty, but the tone veers all over the place, and the plot feels like reckless fantasy. With Catherine McCormack as the target of Osnard's lust and Harold Pinter as Harry's uncle Benny; indeed, the film's view of Central American politics could hardly be more Pinterish.—*A.L.* (4/2/01) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

THE TASTE OF OTHERS
In the provincial city of Rouen, a married factory owner named Castella (Jean-Pierre Bacri) falls in love with a local actress after seeing her perform in a production of Racine's "Bérénice." The actress, Clara (Anne Alvaro), a refined, lonely woman, hangs out with the other actors and a few local artists—a closed bohemian circle—and is appalled by her wealthy admirer, who tells blundering, unfunny jokes. This pleasingly observant and intelligent movie was written by Bacri and his partner, Agnès Jaoui, who directed the movie (plainly but effectively) and also appears in it as a free-living bar girl. Bacri and Jaoui are fascinated by manners in both the smaller and the larger sense: What holds a group of people together? What relationships make a happy life possible? The movie suggests that small groups united by taste may have their comforts, but without a sudden alteration of taste—sometimes called love—no true movement in life is possible. In French.—*D.D.* (3/12/01) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE WIDOW OF SAINT-PIERRE
In the French colony of Saint-Pierre (an island near Newfoundland) during the middle of the nineteenth century, a captain of the guard (Daniel Auteuil) and his high-minded wife (Juliette Binoche) adopt as their protégé a man who has committed a meaningless murder (Emir Kusturica). The murderer is a sweetheart—a gentle and educable fellow. As the community awaits the arrival of a guillotine and an executioner, the captain and his wife refuse to bow to the logic of capital punishment or to administrative bloody-mindedness. For all its stern moral conviction, Patrice Leconte's film manages to duck the only question worth asking: would a less sympathetic murderer be worth saving from the blade? In French.—*D.D.* (Paris.)

ALSO PLAYING

BEFORE NIGHT FALLS (1/8/01)
Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25,
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and
Sutton 1 and 2.

CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON
(12/11/00)
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose
Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas,
East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk,
Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas,
and 64th and 2nd.

FAAT-KINE
Film Forum.

HANNIBAL (2/12/01)
Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex,
42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, and
Orpheum VII.

INTO THE ARMS OF STRANGERS
New York Twin and Village East Cinemas.

KEEP THE RIVER ON YOUR RIGHT
First & 62nd Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

SIMON MAGUS
Quad Cinema.

TRAFFIC (12/25/00 & 1/1/01)
Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.

YI YI (A ONE AND TWO) (1/8/01)
Cinema Village.

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME (12/18/00)
Empire 25, Murray Hill Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.

At Quad Cinema, Noah Taylor as the village outcast in "Simon Magus."

BLAIR DRAWSON

Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through April 21: "Composing for Film." April 7 at 2: "Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters" (1985, Paul Schrader). ♦ April 7 at 5: "Kundun" (1997, Martin Scorsese). The composer Philip Glass, who scored these films, will introduce each screening. ♦ April 8 at 2: "Vertigo" (1958, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ April 8 at 5: "Spellbound" (1945, Hitchcock).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—April 5 at 7, April 7 at 10, and April 8 at 1:30: "Gloria" (1980, John Cassavetes). ♦ April 5 at 9:30, April 7 at 1:45, and April 8 at 9:30: "The Killing of a Chinese Bookie" (1978, Cassavetes). ♦ April 6 at 7, April 7 at 4:30, and April 8 at 7: "Mikey and Nicky" (1976, Elaine May). ♦ April 6 at 9:30, April 7 at 7, and April 8 at 4: "Husbands" (1970, Cassavetes).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—A Lars Von Trier retrospective. All films are in Danish. April 5 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Tranceformer" (1997, Stig Bjorkman) and "The Exhibited" (2000, Jesper Jargil). ♦ April 6 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Humiliated" (1998, Jargil). ♦ April 7 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Element of Crime" (1984, Lars Von Trier). ♦ April 8 at 5:30: "The Kingdom I" (1994, Von Trier). ♦ March 9 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "La Marseillaise" (1938, Jean Renoir; in French). ♦ April 10 at 7:10 and 9:10: "Baron Munchhausen" (1961, Karel Zeman; in Czech).

CINEMA CLASSICS
332 E. 11th St. (971-1015)—April 4 at 8 and 10: "Prospero's Books" (1991, Peter Greenaway). ♦ April 5-6 at 8 and 10 and April 7 at 6, 8, and 10: "Double Indemnity" (1944, Billy Wilder). ♦ April 8 at 5:30, 7:45, and 10 and April 9 at 7:50 and 10: "Stalag 17" (†).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through April 26: The films of Ousmane Sembene. April 6-8 at 1, 3:30, 6:45, and 9:15: "Xala" (1974; in French and Wolof). ♦ April 9-10 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10: "Emitai" (†).

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (360-4321)—"Conversations Between Shadows and Light: Italian Cinematography." April 6 at 7 and April 7 at 3: "The Conformist" (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian). ♦ April 7 at 7: "Apocalypse Now" (1979, Francis Ford Coppola).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through April 8: "New Directors/New Films." April 4 at 6: "Hybrid" (2000, Monteith McCollum). ♦ April 4 at 9: "I Prefer the Sound of the Sea" (2000, Mimmo Calopresti; in Italian). ♦ April 5 at 6 and April 8 at 3: "No Place to Go" (1999, Oskar Roehler; in German). ♦ April 5 at 9 and April 7 at 6: "Durian Durian" (2000, Fruit Chan; in Cantonese). ♦ April 6 at 6 and April 8 at 9: "Roland's Pass" (1999, Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu; in French). ♦ April 6 at 9 and April 7 at noon: "L.I.E." (2001, Michael Cuesta). ♦ April 7 at 3 and April 8 at 6: "Clouds of May" (2000, Nuri Bilge Ceylan; in Turkish). ♦ April 7 at 9 and April 8 at noon: "Hole in the Sky" (2001, Kazuyoshi Kumakiri; in Japanese).

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION & RADIO
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through April 29: Screenings of "Traffik," the British miniseries that inspired Steven Soderbergh's "Traffic." April 5 at 6 and April 7 at 2: Episodes One and Two. ♦ April 6 at 6 and April 8 at 2: Episodes Three, Four, and Five. ♦ "Nick Park's World: The Eccentric Adventures of Wallace and Gromit." April 4-8 at 1 and April 5-6 at 6.

SYMPHONY SPACE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—"Cinema Italian Style." April 10 at 7: "The Spider's Stratagem" (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian). ♦ April 10 at 8:45: "Paisan" (1946, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through April 12: "Salt of the Earth: The Cinema of Ermanno Olmi." All films are in Italian. April 4 at 1 and 6: "Long Live the Lady!" (1987). ♦ April 4 at 3:30 and 8:15: "The Legend of the Holy Drinker" (1988). ♦ April 5 at 1, 5:10, and 9:15: "The Scavengers" (1969). ♦ April 5 at 3 and 7:10: "Genesi—la Creazione e il Diluvio" (1994). ♦ April 6 at 1:30 and 6:15, April 7 at 4:45 and 9, and April 8 at 4:30 and 8:30: "The Circumstance" (1973). ♦ April 6 at 3:30 and 8:15: "The Secret of the Old Woods" (1993). ♦ April 7 at 6:45: "Along the River" (1992). ♦ Movies for kids. April 7-8 at 2: "National Velvet" (†).

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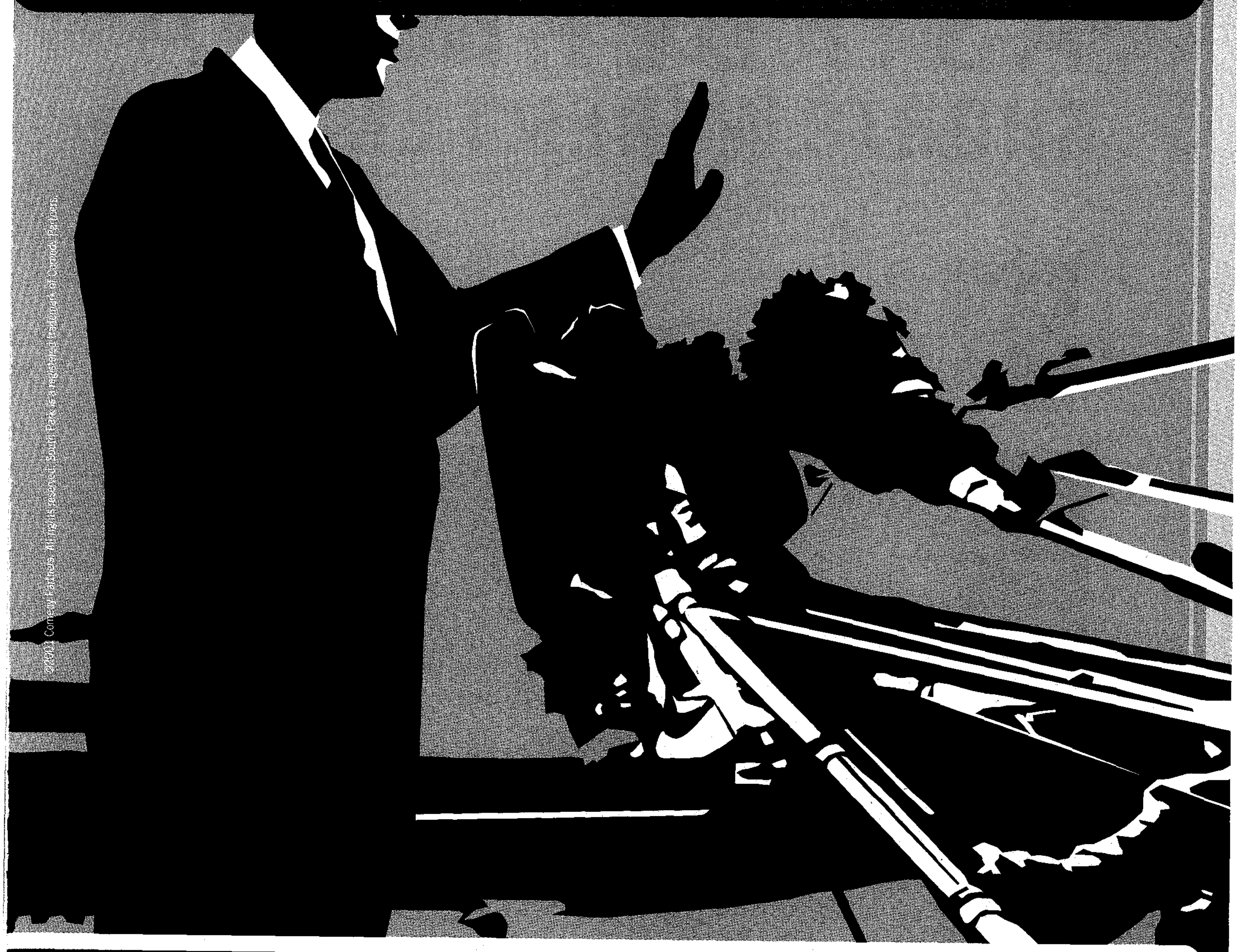

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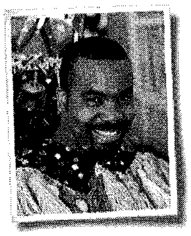

Erwin Trott, Gombey dancer. By the way, he always wears Bermuda shorts under his costume.

Meet the Gombeys, a colorful group of dancers influenced by African, English and American Indian cultures. And they've been playing and dancing in Bermuda for over 120 years. So you bet they're good. So good, in fact, that locals can't resist joining them in their dance along city streets. So visit Bermuda, it's only about two hours away. And for heaven's sake, don't forget your dancing shoes.

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PARADISE ON EARTH
An uninterrupted view over tranquil Caribbean seas may be the single best antidote to a long winter.

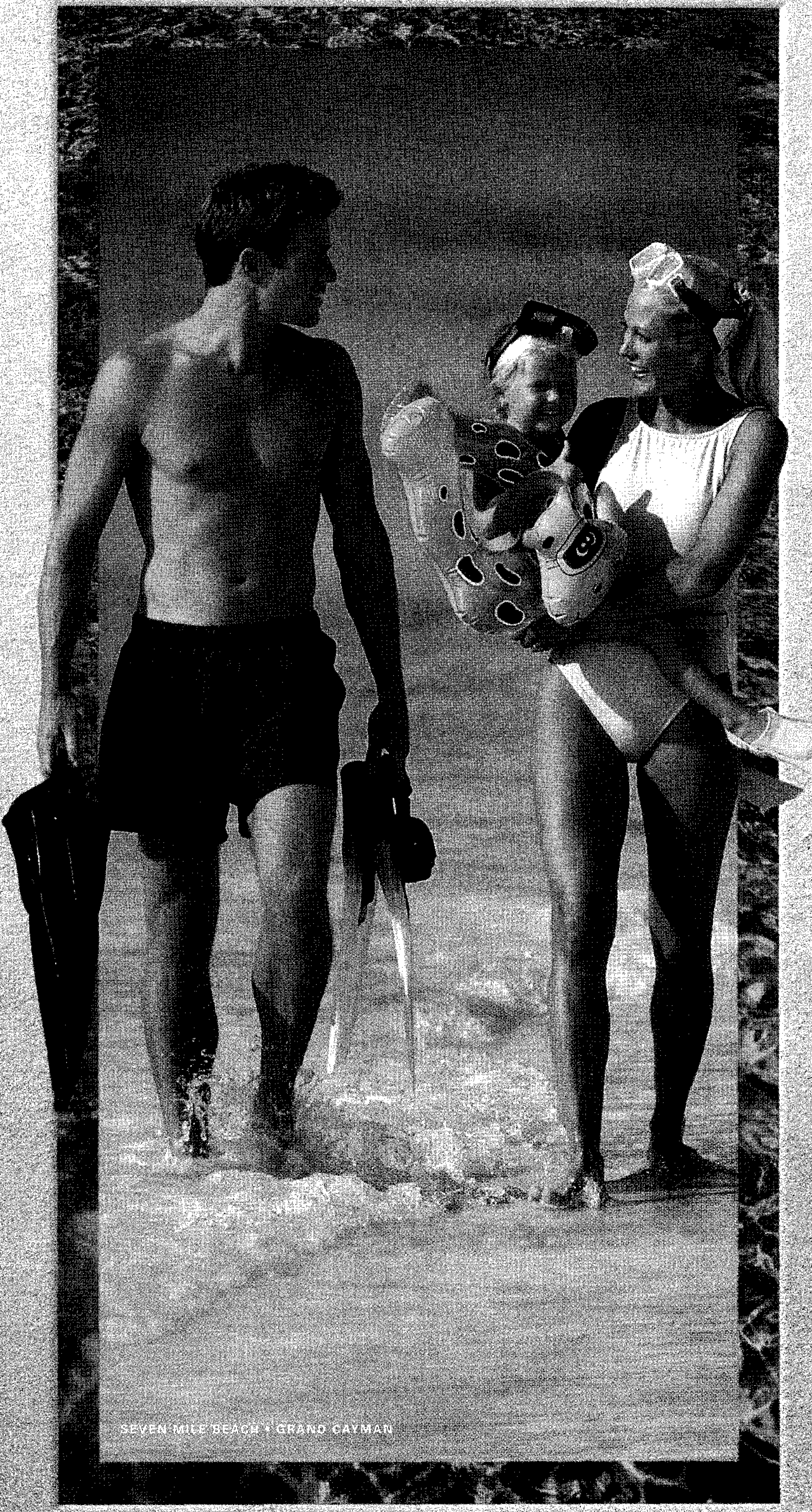
destination paradise

BY KATHLEEN BECKETT

If you only had a few days to spare for a Caribbean vacation, where would you spend it? Vacationers with a taste for the fabulous likely would have Musha Cay on their A-list, the newly opened private island in the Bahamas that rents for $325,000 a week. There's also St. Barth's, a favorite of the glitterati—although word on the beach has it losing some of its luster. Others suggest heading to Parrot Cay, the glitzy resort in Turks and Caicos where Jerry Seinfeld sunbathes. Some might steal away to the sybaritic Four Seasons Resort Nevis, to share the sun with members of the Rolling Stones.

In the Caribbean, though, you don't have to be a celebrity to be treated like one. The following destinations offer everything the hedonista is looking for—sun, solace, spectacular coral reefs, history, and some of the best beaches in the world.

Come back from your family vacation without needing one.


SEVEN MILE BEACH • GRAND CAYMAN

When was the last time you truly relaxed on a family vacation? If "never" comes to mind, perhaps you should consider our beautiful Cayman Islands. Here, your children can run along miles of sandy white beaches, play in our turquoise waters or simply spend a perfect sun day cultivating their imaginations. From luxury hotels with children's programs to kid-friendly condos, or private vacation home rentals, you'll find everything you need to relax, Cayman Islands style. For more information, call your travel agent or 1-800-346-3313, or visit our websites at www.caymanislands.ky and www.divecayman.ky.

Relax Cayman Islands Style

CAYMAN ISLANDS
Grand Cayman • Cayman Brac • Little Cayman

CAYMAN ISLANDS

BEST FOR: SCUBA DIVING

Formed by the limestone caps of submerged mountain peaks, these three islands have dramatic vertical drops (known as "walls"), rich with coral.

MUST-DO LIST Start on Grand Cayman, the biggest island of the group. Well settled and urbane, Grand Cayman's leading sight is **Seven Mile Beach**. Here you'll find calm water and golden sand that shelves gently off to the west. You can also sit back at one of the many fine restaurants and watch the magnificent sunsets. Book a room in one of their first-rate hotels, such as the **Hyatt Regency**, the most luxurious accommodations in Cayman.

Later, journey to the western end of Grand Cayman and see something unusual, the **Turtle Farm**. Do your bit for the environment and adopt a little fella to set free in the ocean, then head to the nearby **Cracked Conch by the Sea**, a favorite spot for Cayman-style seafood, and have some breaded conch.

Head to the east end of the island, past the capital of George Town, a gold mine for jewelry boutiques, including Tiffany and Cartier. Just out of town you'll find local offerings. Stop by **24-K Mon Jewelers** for a pendant dangling with coins discovered by divers. Or check out **Pure Art** for a necklace made of Caymanite (a distinctive brown-striped stone).

Just how little is Little Cayman? It is so tiny (less than a hundred and seventy residents) that when a plane lands at the airport—a tin shack with a sand runway—it's big news. You don't go there for the shopping or the nightlife, but for some of the best diving in the world. The shore off Little Cayman has a sheer drop to seemingly limitless depths. Coral abounds. You'll also find some of the best bonefishing around.

Cayman Brac is another sports lover's paradise. *Brac*, which means "bluff" in Gaelic, refers to the hundred-and-forty-foot-high limestone ridge that stretches down the center of the island like a backbone. Explore the caves created by this wonder, or walk the numerous hiking trails to the **Parrot Reserve**. Keep your eyes peeled for the white-crowned Cayman Brac parrot.

For more information on Cayman Islands, call the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism at 800-346-3313, or visit www.caymanislands.ky and www.divecayman.ky.

© David C. Tomlinson/Stone

VANISHING POINT

Cayman Islands offer more than stunning sunsets over calm waters—beneath the lapping waves are opportunities to dive to near-limitless depths.

THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

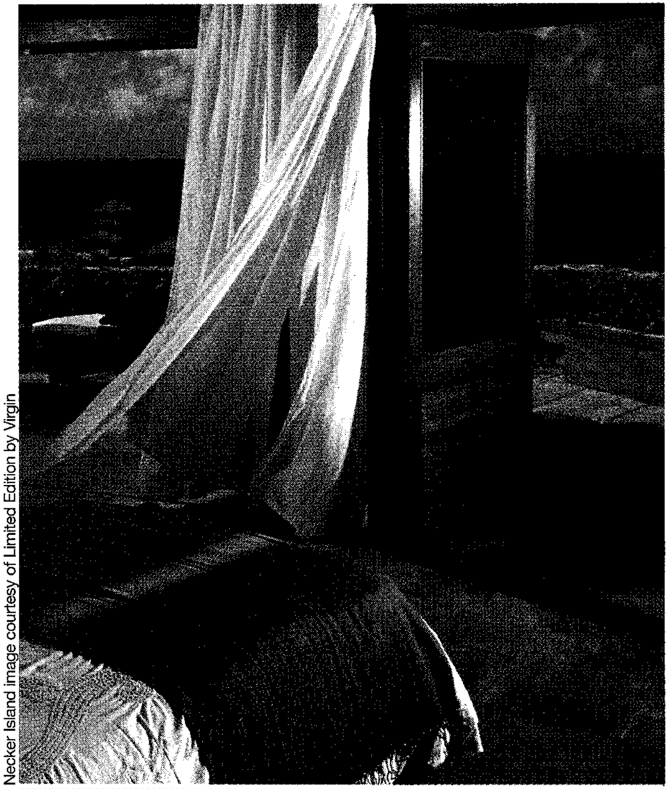
BEST FOR: SAILING AND WATER SPORTS

If you love swimming and sailing or simply gazing at water, the British Virgin Islands (B. V. I.), a collection of more than fifty islands, are for you.

MUST-DO LIST Those who sail will want to visit the **Sir Francis Drake Channel**. One of the great sailing passages in the world, the channel allows you to sail past pristine islands with colorful histories, rife with rumors of pirate treasure. When you come to shore, visit **Bomba's Surfside Shack** on Tortola, a corrugated tin and driftwood contraption on the beach not far from the redoubtable **Long Bay Beach Resort & Villas**. While at Bomba's, have a Painkiller, the national drink made with local Pusser's rum, cream of coconut, and fruit juices.

Those in search of something a bit more tame should dine just down the road at the **Sugar Mill**, a historic inn that serves a fusion of Continental and Caribbean food. Be sure to try their smoked

(continued)



Necker Island image courtesy of Limited Edition by Virgin

YOUR OWN PRIVATE ISLAND

The Balinese-style enclave of Necker Island on B. V. I. has canopied living and lounging areas that open onto individual balconies.

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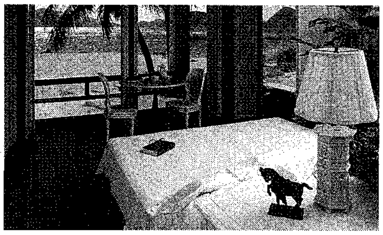

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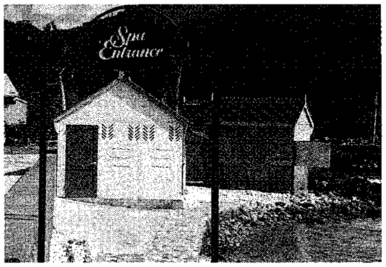

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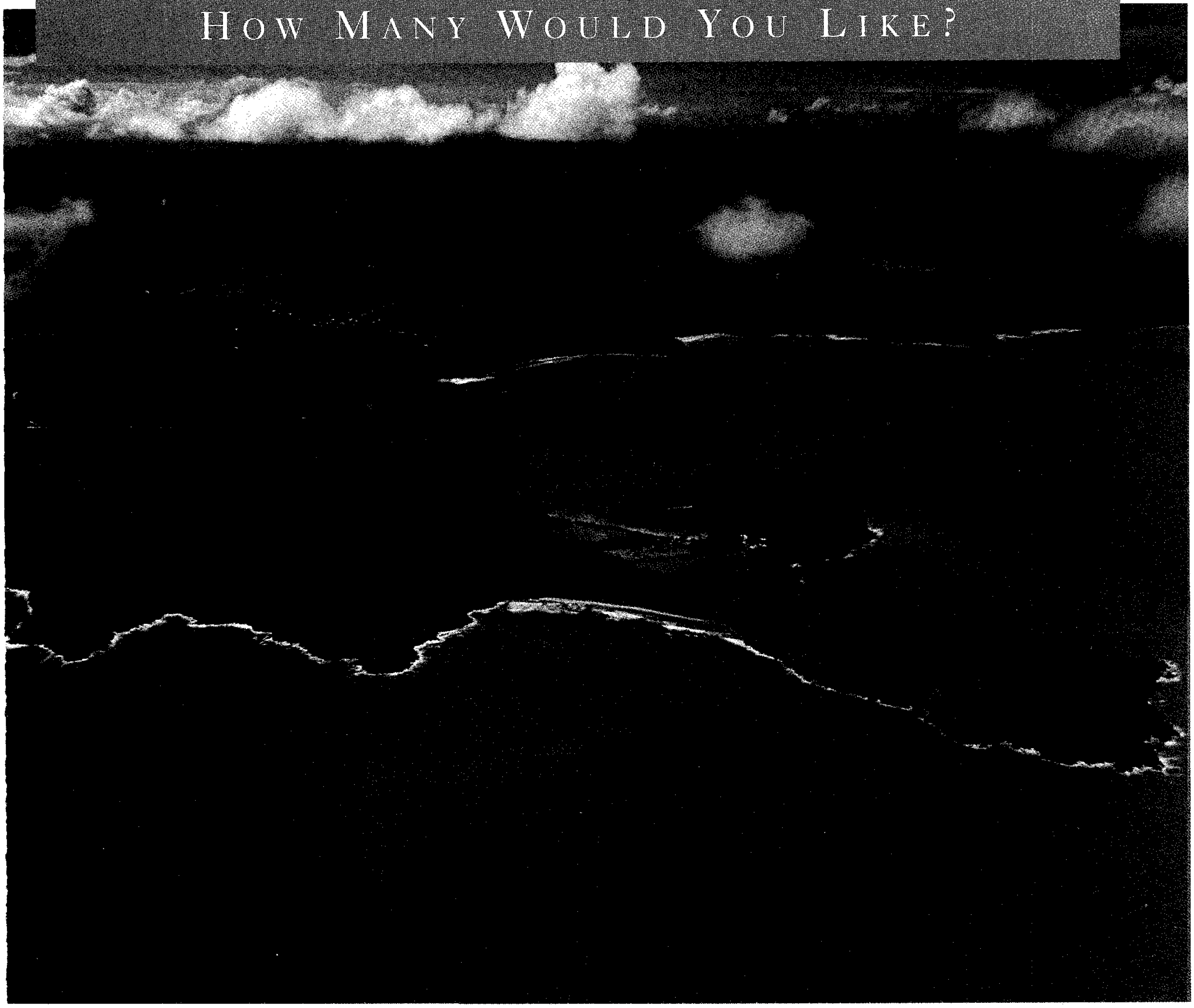

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For more information on B. V. I., call the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board at 800-888-5563, Ext. 624, or visit www.BVItouristboard.com.

BARBADOS

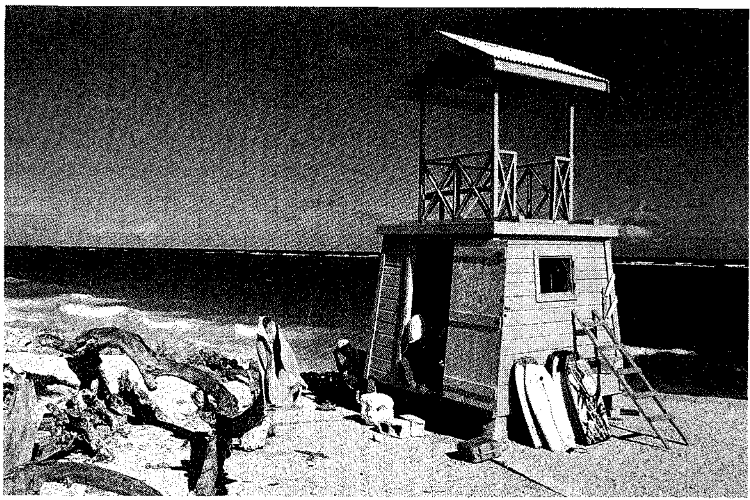
BEST FOR: EXPLORING AND BEACH LUXURIATING

Referred to as Little England because of its low-key elegance and colonial great-houses, Barbados is also known for its easy access to water sports.

Must-Do List Start at the western side of the island, aptly named the Platinum Coast. Most of the better hotels, such as the luxury villas at **Settlers' Beach Villa Hotel** are here. Guests can have afternoon tea, relax on the beach, or make arrangements to snorkel or sail. Within short walking distance of the hotel is **Folkestone Marine Park** with a snorkeling trail through the offshore coral.

On the wilder eastern side of the island, the Atlantic Ocean crashes into its rocky, water-whipped cliffs. Everyone stops by the sleepy **Atlantis** restaurant to watch the spectacular show. Heading south, don't miss **Crane Beach**, recently distinguished as one of the best beaches in the world by "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous."

Drive your mini-moke inland to **St. Nicholas Abbey**, which is not actually an abbey, but a working plantation with a seventeenth-century mansion. (Take note of the fireplaces—the newly arrived settlers had not yet realized that even on winter nights, they wouldn't need the warmth of a fire.)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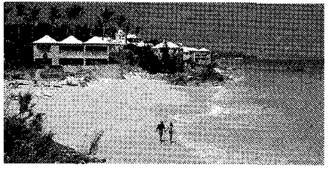
ENDLESS SUMMER

Bounded by cliffs that slope down to the shore, Crane Beach in Barbados is known for its pink-and-white coral sands.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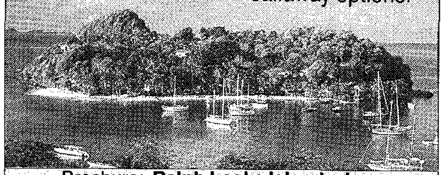
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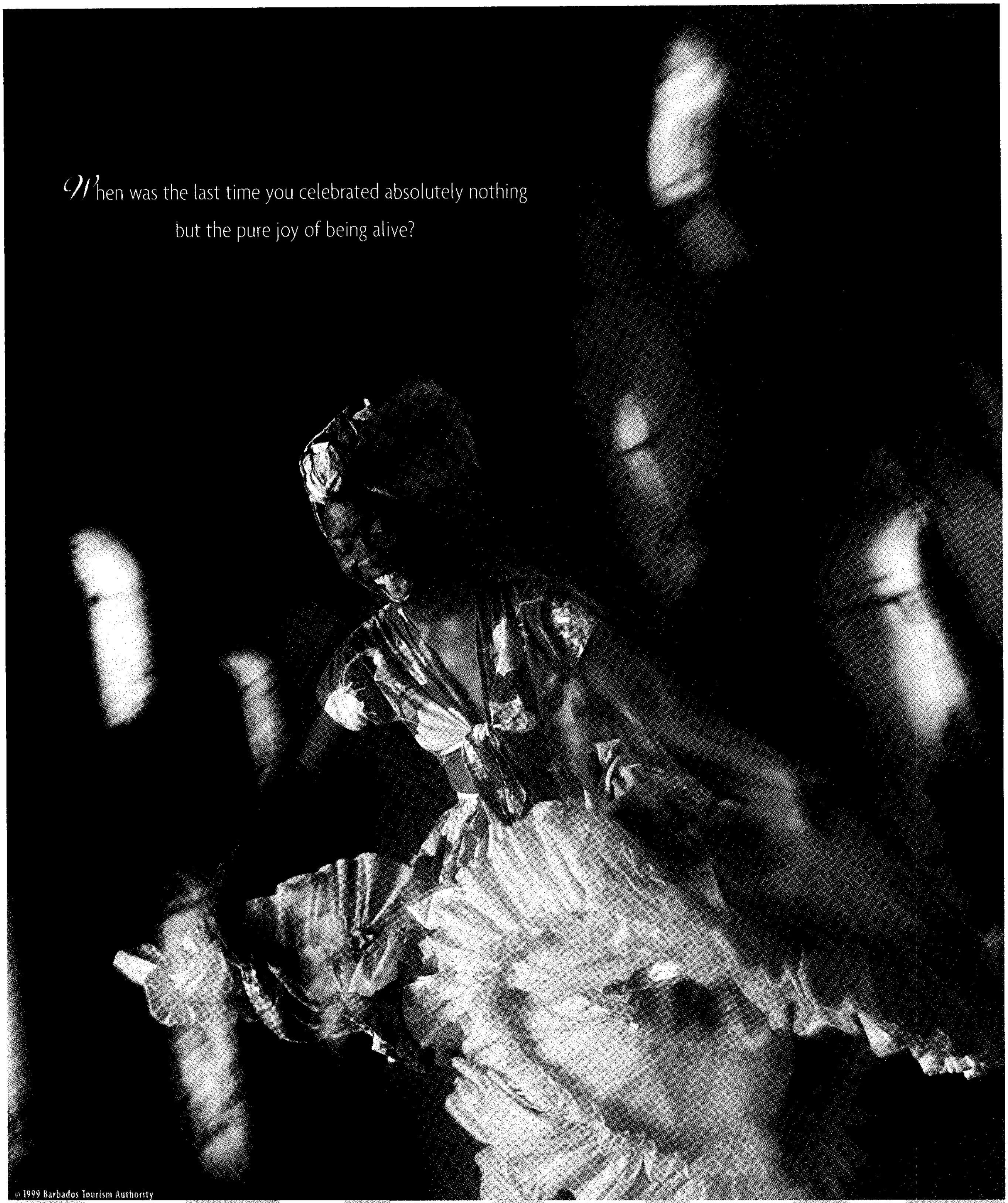
When was the last time you celebrated absolutely nothing
but the pure joy of being alive?
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REJOICE

BARBADOS

JUST BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION

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Include **Bridgetown** in your itinerary, a bustling city with lots of duty-free jewelry shops and a miniature **Trafalgar Square**, complete with a statue of Lord Nelson. Erected thirty years before the one in London, it stands witness to the island's age-old relationship with Mother England.

For more information on Barbados, call the Barbados Tourism Authority at 888-BARBADOS, or visit www.barbados.org.

JAMAICA

BEST FOR: RESORTS

If you have only a few days to spare, you'll want to spend them at a great resort, and Jamaica has some of the best in the Caribbean.

MUST-DO LIST If you're staying at any of the three **SuperClubs Grand Lido Resorts**, just stay where you are. Why wander when all resort amenities are furnished right there? Case in point: The Grand Lido Braco's town square holds a weekly gala of local culinary specialties, with Jamaican musicians playing street-party tunes, and local artisans selling their wares.

At the **Half Moon Golf, Tennis & Beach Club**, play golf, tennis, or enjoy the spa. The resort also makes shuttle buses available to the **Barnett Estate**, a repository of eighteenth-century Jamaican life. End the tour dining at **Belfield 1794**, the open-air restaurant built in the estate's sugar mill.

Those wishing to see the unknown Jamaica should head to **Boston Bay**, the beachside community located outside Port Antonio. It's here that Jamaican jerk was born, the savory barbecue of chicken, fish, or pork. Come early in the morning to watch Dudley Taylor build his maho wood fire and start to grill. By lunch, walk away with a thick slice, wrapped in newspaper and take it on a bamboo raft ride down the Rio Grande river.

Later climb up the cool Blue Mountains to visit Noël Coward's hilltop villa, **Firefly.** Visit his grave, and gape at the view. You can also rent out Ian Fleming's **Goldeneye**, a secluded compound that's now a Chris Blackwell property. Consider becoming a novelist, if this is what royalties can buy.

For more information on Jamaica, call the Jamaica Tourist Board at 800-JAMAICA, or visit www.1-800-jamaica.com.

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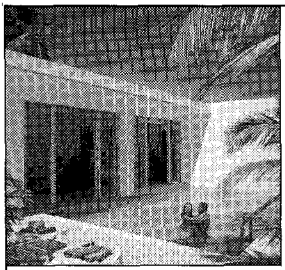

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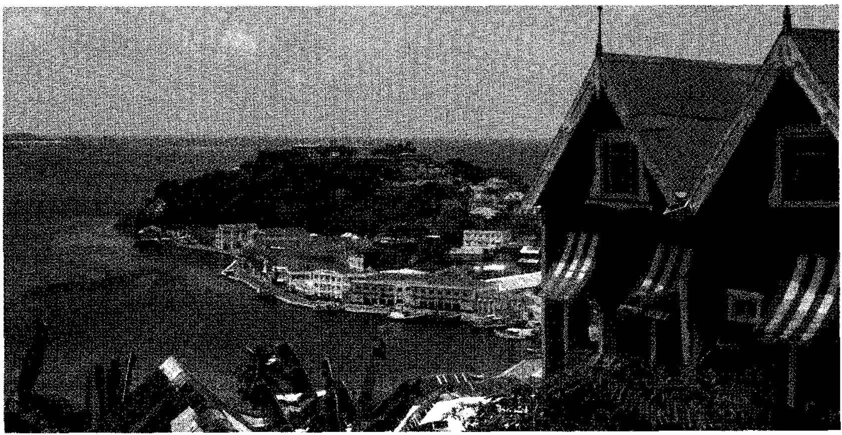

RELAX, ISLAND STYLE

Island living means more than just a less-frenetic approach to daily life. Here among sunny vistas and azure waters, everything seems less complicated. *Left:* A Jamaican clapboard home that lets nature in; *Right:* the verdant skyline of St. George in Bermuda.

Left: © Dave G. Houser/Corbis; Right: © The Purcell Team/Corbis

BERMUDA

BEST FOR: ELEGANCE, SHOPPING, AND CULTURE

Not actually in the Caribbean, but the Mid-Atlantic, Bermuda is an island of civility. Here afternoon tea is a religious ritual, bobbies direct traffic, and celebrities sun and shop.

MUST-DO LIST Be sure to leave the pristine beaches of Bermuda at least once to shop on **Front Street** in Hamilton. The emphasis here is not on duty-free booty, but on some of the loveliest British goods this side of Bond Street. Go to one of the pastel shopping institutions like **H. A. & E. Smith** or **Trimingham's**, and pick up a kilt, a Fair Isle sweater, or Bermuda shorts, to wear to a hearty brunch at the **Waterlot Inn**, the waterside eatery at the Fairmont's Southampton Princess.

Later visit the **Bermuda Perfumery**, fragrant with the heavenly scents of oleander, jasmine, passionflower, and frangipani. All are grown on the grounds, and are turned into essential fragrances using the ancient *enfleurage* process.

Later, hop on your scooter and head to charming **St. George**, a four-hundred-year-old town with nary a right angle in its charming streets. As the oldest continuously inhabited town of English origin in the Western Hemisphere, St. George has just been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

For an island that's only twenty-one square miles, Bermuda is crammed with culture. You'll find music, theatre, and dance companies—everything that makes this island as much a paradise for the spirit as it is for the body. For a blast of culture, be sure to attend the **Bermuda International Film Festival** (beginning April 20th), and hob-nob with film-industry types from all over the world.

Kathleen Beckett is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in InStyle, Elle, Condé Nast Traveler, *and* Travel + Leisure.

For more information on Bermuda, call the Bermuda Department of Tourism at 800-BERMUDA, or visit www.bermudatourism.com.

SEE IT LIKE A NATIVE

Much more than its crystal-blue waters, the Caribbean has secret delights that locals know but that others rarely experience.

A thirty-five-acre island located only two hundred yards off St. Vincent, **Young Island Resort** is a paradise of palm trees and flowering plants. Take a short swim to the **Coconut Bar**, ferry to St. Vincent, or book a minimum seven nights, and take advantage of a free two- or three-day sail to the other Grenadines. • Near **Point Pleasant Resort** in Red Hook, St. Thomas is **Duffy's Love Shack**, the home of the monstrous cocktail, the Volcano, appropriately served flaming. • A five-minute stroll from **Pavilions & Pools Hotel** on St. Thomas, U. S. V. I. is **Lindquist Beach**, one of the last undeveloped beaches on the east end of the island. • Located at the **Bolongo Bay Beach Club & Villas** in U. S. V. I. is the **St. Thomas Diving Club**, which offers beginner-to-advanced underwater excursions. • Near the **Sonesta Beach Resort & Villas Anguilla** are galleries and studios exhibiting local artists, including **Savannah Gallery** and **Cheddie's Carving Studio**. • To learn more about the islands, contact the **Caribbean Tourism Organization** for a free "Caribbean Vacation Planner."

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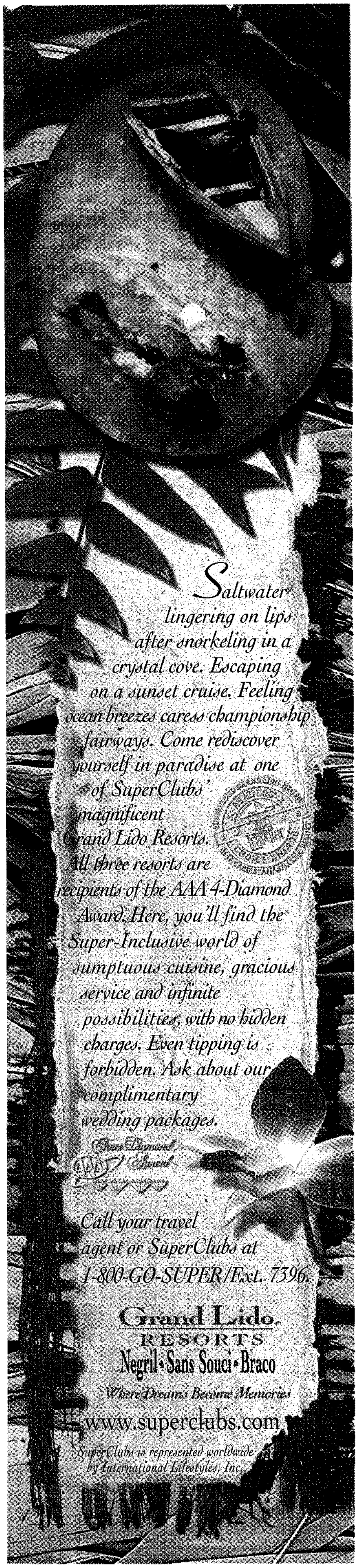

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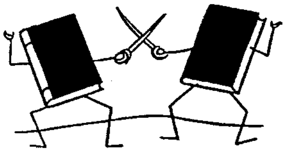


"Nature repeats herself," the poet said, describing birdsong. "Repeat, repeat, repeat; revise, revise, revise." Now the birds have come home to roost at Tara. Last week, it was announced that the estate of Margaret Mitchell, who wrote "Gone with the Wind" back when people still thought that antebellum labor camps were appealing as long as the guards' daughters wore corsets, was suing to prevent the publication of a new novel called "The Wind Done Gone." It is a first novel by Alice Randall, and it tells the story of a mulatto half sister of Scarlett who is called, variously, Cinnamon, Cynara, and Cindy. Once you get past the modish intertextuality of the thing, Cinnamon gets up to exactly the kind of high jinks you would expect a heroine named Cinnamon to get up to in a novel of the postbellum yet still old South, while teaching useful lessons about the real history of Reconstruction along the way.

That the Mitchell estate is acting pettily seems beyond argument, but the case does raise a good question. Why not show up the hollowness of a bad book by writing a good book, rather than a new version of the bad book? Well, one gathers from reading the interview with Alice Randall that accompanies the bound galleys of her book, because "Gone with the Wind" has "reached the status of myth in our culture," and, like all myths, it leaves out a lot, which the new myth puts back in. The silenced must be heard; the invisible must be seen. One version or another of this reasoning has been getting a lot of literary work lately. There was the novel "Lo's Diary," which told "Lolita" from the point of view of the nymphet (Nabokov's son sued, and settled for split royalties); there has been a new version of "Wuthering Heights," seen from the point of view of Heathcliff. There was a "Jekyll and Hyde" seen from the point of view of the maid, an Oz novel seen from the point of view of the Witch, and a "Godfather" retold with Fredo as the Don. No, sorry: that was the last Presidential election. Still, at a higher literary level there was Peter Carey's variation on "Great Expectations," retold from the point of view of Magwitch. (At around the same time, a movie retold "Great Expectations" from the point of view of Gwyneth Paltrow getting in and out of black silk underwear—a happy instance of the hitherto unseen made visible.) There is no surer formula for opening a publisher's door than saying that you are going to write the same book somebody else did but from a different point of view.

A clue to the meaning of all this lies in the kind of stories that get retold. Although the retellings are usually said to be of books that are "classics," they are almost always, to be precise, romances. ("Great Expectations," with its fairy-tale arrangements, is the closest thing Dickens ever wrote to one.) The whole let-me-tell-you-what-they-won't craze, in fact, seems to have started back in the sixties, with Jean Rhys's fine "Wide Sargasso Sea," a prequel to "Jane Eyre," which told what it felt like to be Rochester's crazy wife. This suggests the human emotion behind the literary artifice. The desire is not so much to deromanticize the romantic classic—a real one like Brontë's or a kitsch one like Mitchell's—as to make a new romance, in which somebody more like you does the romancing. What bugs the rewriter is the unchallenged existence of somebody else's romantic narrative, the other guy's or girl's romance. The lesson that

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

underlies every account of passionate romantic love, after all, is that it can take place only on small islands of ignorance, where Rhett and Scarlett and Jane and Rochester don't notice what's going on (the slaves on the plantation, the woman in the attic). Naturally, we want to vote them off the island—and vote ourselves onto it. The impulse behind "The Wind Done Gone" is not to create the world as it was; it is to create a cinnamon Scarlett worthy of a cinnamon Rhett.

And why *shouldn't* we cast ourselves in the big parts, make literature into a kind of po-mo karaoke? Shut your eyes and you can already see next year's list: "Gatsby" from the point of view of the aggrieved George Wilson; "Portnoy" as seen by Portnoy's sister (or has Erica Jong already written that one?); "The Sun Also Rises" from the point of view of Robert Cohn (now, that would be a book). Writing always leaves something or someone out, after all, and those who have been excluded can reach for the pen and tell it for themselves. As you read this, it is already being rewritten from the point of view of the author's children, whose clamor for lunch is left unheard; the online programmers, whose agency in getting it to the office is left unseen; and the copy editor, who invisibly fixes its grammar while sighing at its small ironies. They have their stories, too. Everybody does, even the birds.

—*Adam Gopnik*

OFF BROADWAY
HOW TO GET AHEAD IN COMEDY

Most nights, after performing as Harold Hill in "The Music Man," Craig Bierko (the sexiest star on Broadway, according to *People*) goes home to his Upper West Side sublet, boots up his laptop, connects to the Net, and becomes Bierko, Prince of the Stump.

The Stump is an invitation-only Internet community populated by about three hundred of Hollywood's best-paid comedy writers and producers, who log on to share thoughts, gags, and gossip. Its members include James L. Brooks, Penny Marshall, Carrie Fisher, and Lisa Kudrow, along with the producers of shows like "Friends" and "Everybody Loves Raymond." Last fall, Bierko was invited to join. In response to the invitation, he made his first post: "Yes, for the love of Pete Sampras, I accept." The next six months brought a torrent of Bierko epigrams:

"Woke up and smelled the coffee. Awaiting further instructions."

"Is it just me, or am I an egomaniac?"

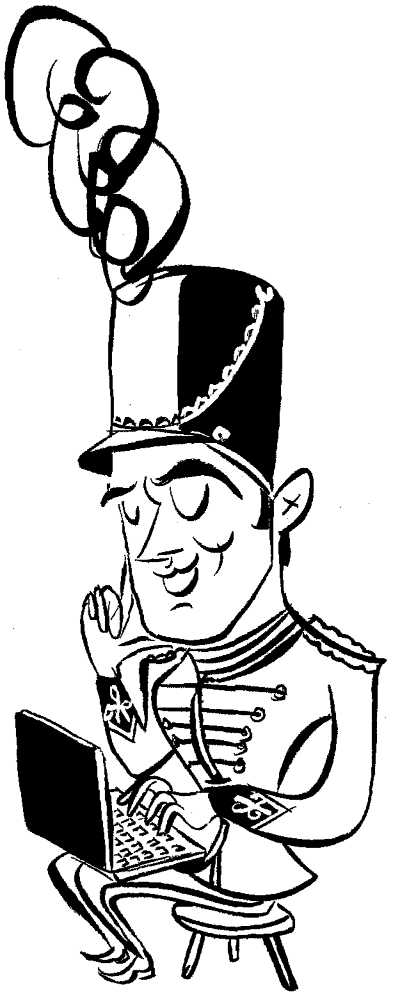
"Breakfast. Not just for breakfast anymore!"

"George Harrison was the 'Ringo' of the Beatles."

"I'm about to go eat lunch alone. Is there some polite way I can get out of this?"

The Stump bunch was amused, even impressed—Bierko, handsome actor guy, seemed to have a droll streak. "Am I wrong or did Bierko just suddenly become funny?" Gavin Polone, an executive producer of Larry David's "Curb Your Enthusiasm," wrote at one point. "Craig Bierko—you're maybe the funniest person on the planet. I'm very threatened," read a post from Ken Levine, a writer and director for "Frasier." Before long, Bierko was getting offered all kinds of work. Jay Kogen, the Stump's founder and a former co-executive producer of "Frasier," announced on the Stump that he had written a Bierko vehicle for CBS called "Nat 'n Thad," in which Bierko would play a spoiled playboy who loses his inheritance. Another Stump participant, Nell Scovell, the creator of the TV series "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch," wanted Bierko to star in her pilot "Trust Me"—a comedy about what might have happened had James Bond married Pussy Galore. Others on the Stump didn't think these offers were good enough for Bierko. "Bierko, pass on the pilot—wait for a huge role in a better thing," Jon Turteltaub, the director of "While You Were Sleeping" and "Phenomenon," advised, before adding, "I have a pilot for you." He thought that Bierko would make a good newspaper editor in a show he was developing for ABC.

There were still other pilots, other scripts, and Bierko was flattered. But he wanted more. Emboldened by his reviews on the Stump, he found himself longing for something more substantial: a hand in the creative process, a writing part, to complement his acting career. "I'd like to be in the room with the other writers, or participating with the writers in some way," Bierko said recently as he mulled his options. He was noodling with a screenplay of his own, entitled "Drowning in Midair," about a Hollywood publicist with a damaged past. "At times," Bierko said, "I see myself just dropping everything and moving to France to write."



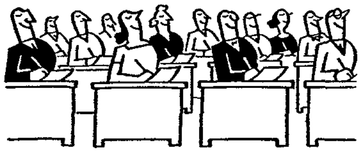
Craig Bierko

His new friends on the Stump weren't sure that was such a great idea. "I'm sorry, but Craig Bierko is too good-looking to be just a writer," Turteltaub said over the phone. Kogen stated flatly that he'd prefer to keep Bierko in front of the camera. "For Craig Bierko to not act would be a total waste," he said.

Bierko seems to have taken their advice. His "Music Man" run ends in May, and he has accepted a job—this hasn't really come up on the Stump—on "Sex and the City," in a two-episode role as a love interest of Sarah Jessica Parker. Pussy Galore will have to wait.

—*David Blum*

DEPT. OF BIG THOUGHTS
THE 1845TH



Thinking (big time) prevailed the other day at the get-together of the two-hundred-and-twenty-one-year-old American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which was held in the Time & Life Building, courtesy of the Time Inc. top banana, Norman Pearlstine, one of the Academy's thirty-two hundred artist-scientist-scholar-businessman-writer-politician-leader fellows. The theme at the event, billed as the "1845th Stated Meeting," was "Challenges in a New Century: The Engaged Intellectual." It was also the occasion for bestowing the organization's 2001 Scholar-Patriot Award on Fellow William T. Golden, ninety-one, a science adviser to President Truman and a longtime public servant, educator, and investment banker who is credited with inventing an anti-aircraft machine gun in the Second World War, establishing the framework for the National Science Foundation, and serving with the Atomic Energy Commission, the State Department, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Museum of Natural History, the Central Park Conservancy, Mount Sinai Hospital, Barnard College, and Harvard.

Golden, decked out in his good blue suit, was a twinkly live wire, and he said informally at the outset that anything the Academy deemed appropriate to do or say in the way of "challenges" was O.K. with him. The meeting was packed with fellows who were much less frisky—they looked as though they'd sat through several other demanding meetings just before this one. Everybody seemed to know that the first meeting was held in the "Philosophy Chamber in the University of Cambridge,"on May 30, 1780. The Academy set out "to cultivate every art and science which may tend to advance the interest, honor, dignity, and happiness of a free, independent, and virtuous people." The charter members included both Samuel Adams and John Adams, along with John Hancock.

All present at No. 1845 nodded affirmatively as a body when the Academy's president, James O. Freedman, an unusually genial-looking fellow, said that "the role of the intellectual in this country is seriously undervalued." He went on, "We need to appreciate that intellectuals are gifted individuals with unconventional angles of vision, and are often endowed with an exceptional capacity to advance the common good. We need to acknowledge that intellectuals make significant and enduring contributions to our lives and to helping Americans exercise the responsibilities of democratic citizenship." Everybody nodded in assent.

Others took it from there. Gordon Conway, the president of the Rockefeller Foundation (he is an agricultural ecologist), said that as the world became smaller the disparity between the haves and the have-nots was getting bigger, and that an engaged intellectual was a citizen of the world and had to think globally. He cited as illustration the phenomenon of whole tuna from the United States being sent to Japan to be processed and then returned to this country to be used in sushi restaurants. More nodding.

Joel E. Cohen, the author of the book "How Many People Can the Earth Support?," who is a professor of populations at Columbia and the Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor at Rockefeller University, said that universal basic and secondary education was the way to go to reduce disease, population growth, and poverty throughout the world. No problem. No question.

Denis Donoghue, the Henry James Professor of English and American Letters at N.Y.U., said that to him the ideal student was John Keats, because of "the degree to which he paid attention." People should read Keats's poem "On Sitting Down to Read 'King Lear' Once Again," he said, as an example of how to pay attention to what they read. They had to "try to understand the topography of the humanities" and to contemplate "what is the poetic life." Agreed.

Later on, at a dinner honoring 2001's Scholar Patriot, President Freedman called William T. Golden to stand beside him as he read from the award certificate (suitable for framing): "Visionary statesman, respected advisor, magnificent patron of science and culture, trusted friend and mentor to generations of men and women, you are the exemplar of what the Academy's founders envisioned as the engaged citizen."

Tributes were given, winding up with one from Professor Cohen (the population expert), who speculated on what the middle initial "T" stood for in the honoree's name. "In case you did not know, the 'T' stands for Theodore, which in Greek means God's gift," Professor Cohen said, and continued ingeniously, "Thoughtful, Tolerant, Talented at retaining friends, Tenacious, Thorough, Thrifty, Tough-minded, Technologically adept, Temperate, and Tender, he has been a gift to each of the many lives he has touched." Agreement. Applause. Approbation.

Golden seemed cheerful and unintimidated by the accolades. He said, "I want to quote Groucho Marx, who said, 'Before I begin to speak, I have something important to say.' " Everybody nodded solemnly. Golden gave a merry grin and said, "I'm grateful for the award and basically grateful that I'm still here myself."

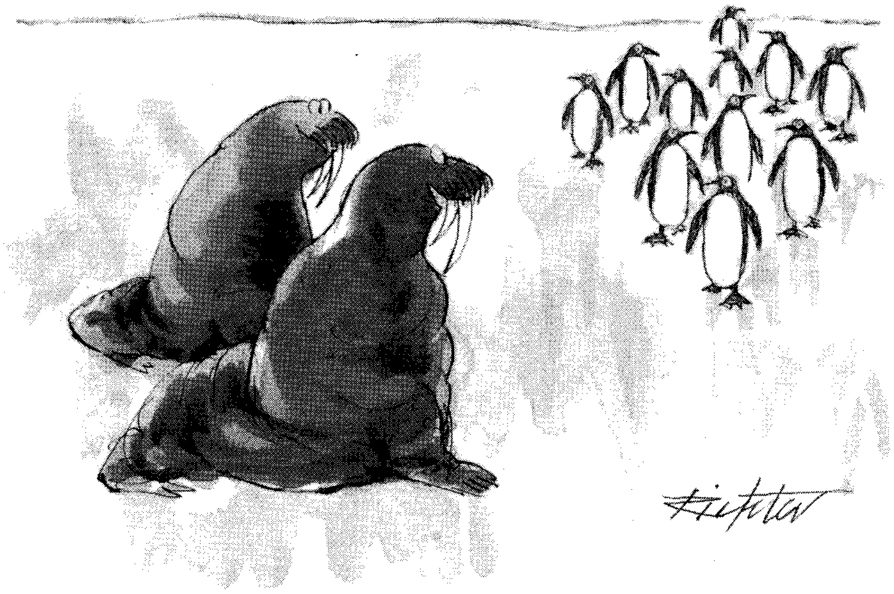
The fellows nodded again, looking like engaged intellectuals who were meeting the challenges of the new century.

—*Lillian Ross*

DEPT. OF DOUBLE LIVES
THE SOAP NURSE

On a slow Thursday not long ago in Unit 9, the rapid-care section of the Emergency Department at St. Vincent's Hospital, in Greenwich Village, Nurse Cora McCraw tended to a man with a cough, a man with an infected splinter, and a woman who needed stitches removed. Then, on her lunch hour, she tended to Viki Davidson (née Lord). Viki was in bad shape. She'd recently had a modified mastectomy, after suffering a stroke, a brain aneurysm, multiple-personality disorder, and a visit to Heaven. Nurse McCraw had been called in to suggest follow-up care. After

POSTSCRIPT
MISCHA RICHTER



"Here come the suits."

RICHTER, 7/19/93

Mischa Richter died on March 23rd, at the age of ninety. One day last August, a friend and I drove up to Provincetown to pay him a visit. Mischa welcomed us into his sunny waterfront home in high spirits. "I may be nuts," he said, "but unless the sky is falling I usually feel pretty good." After admiring some of his recent paintings, we tagged along on a brisk walk to a small sidewalk café for brunch. For my companion's benefit, Mischa sketched his extraordinary past: his childhood in Ukraine; his family's flight during the Russian Revolution; his early years in New York, when Harold Ross and William Randolph Hearst vied for his work. He was so prolific that he ended up working for both; this magazine published some fifteen hundred of his drawings. Mischa's reminiscences were punctuated by an explosive laugh and decorated with oddly old-fashioned slang. When it was time to go, he invited us to return anytime, for "a hearty handshake, a hot meal, and a kick in the pants."

—*Lee Lorenz*

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telephoning a few cancer centers for advice, McCraw recommended that Viki see a doctor in three months.

Viki was an easy case, not least because she is a character on ABC's "One Life to Live." Nurse McCraw, a small, energetic fifty-two-year-old from South Carolina, works part time as a registered nurse at St. Vincent's but spends the rest of her week serving as a freelance medical consultant to soap operas, including "One Life," as it's known in the trade. Over the last ten years, she has worked for most of the New York soaps, helping them get things right. McCraw looks over scripts for medical inaccuracies, researches rare illnesses, teaches actors how to take patients' blood pressure or hook them up to monitors, and generally, as she says, "makes it sound more medical." If you watch closely, you can sometimes even catch her playing a Llanview Hospital nurse on "One Life to Live." "It's more of an emergency atmosphere over at the soap opera," she said one day recently, at St. Vincent's. "You have to move faster, and it's crazier."

McCraw says that actors sometimes call her the night before a taping to ask her to change a scripted illness to one they can pronounce. Writers call wondering whether a woman can get pregnant with twins from two different fathers (yes, technically), whether a nurse can save someone by injecting a hypodermic needle, "Pulp Fiction" style, directly into a patient's heart (only as a last resort), or whether switching a diagnosis from ovarian cancer to chemical-weapons exposure will dictate a major change in symptoms (not necessarily). "No matter how crazy it is," she said, "I try to make it work medically."

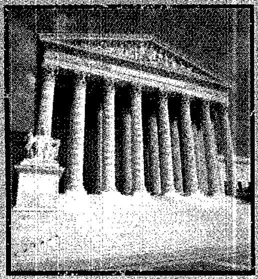
Nurse McCraw has certain rules of thumb. Severe head traumas, which are quite common in soap towns, tend to require ventilators and therefore happen mostly to characters who don't need to talk. When lead characters fall ill or get injured, they often require weeks of care, but minor characters are likely to meet quick, violent, inexpensive ends. "If we don't shoot you, we run you over with a car," she said.

One recent day on the "One Life to Live" set, McCraw oversaw the aftermath of a bar shootout. During rehearsal, she kept an eye on the monitor while she talked with the costume designer about whose wounds required bloody, tattered clothing and which actors would wear which color scrubs. She fiddled with medical equipment that she'd ordered for the hospital scenes, and checked the bandage on a character named Max, who was turning out to be a big bleeder. Kelly, a wild girl, lay on the floor in a floral skirt and a blood-soaked lime-green top, and Kevin, her husband's handsome brother, with whom she may very well have been falling in love, was holding her hand. "Cora," she asked, "am I supposed to be dazed when I'm shot?" McCraw said, "Yes, sort of like an animal hit by a car." A character named Daniel, who probably got what he deserved, wanted to know why he should act unconscious, as he'd only been shot in the leg. "You hit your head when you fell down," she suggested.

When Nurse McCraw's real hospital colleagues hear her discussing a case, they are not always sure whether she's treating a real patient or one from the show. So at St. Vincent's when she uses the phone she speaks in a low voice, especially when she is talking about exploding bullets or the Mafia doctor who let his patient die, or advising a writer who wants to pronounce a minor character dead on the scene, in which case she has been known to say, "Go on and just shoot him in the head."

—*Joshua Gamson*

IF YOU'VE BEEN FIRED BECAUSE YOU'RE GAY THE LAW CAN HELP.



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
A BASKET CASE

In 1948, Earl Tupper saw the light. Tupper had invented what he thought was a marvellous new line of airtight plastic food containers. They had clean, modern lines, and when you shut the lid they emitted a distinctive, pleasing pop. But nobody was buying them. On the shelf, they looked like everyone else's containers. What he needed, Tupper realized, was women who could demonstrate to their friends just how marvellous these containers were. He needed to take his products out of the store and into the home. He needed to build a movement. And thus was born the Tupperware party.

Fifty years later, American business is still reaping the dividends. In 1999, 7.7 billion dollars' worth of merchandise was sold at home parties by companies like Creative Memories and the Pampered Chef. And, just last month, thousands of home partyers helped pull off a bizarre feat: they turned a book about basket weaving into a best-seller. The book is "Longaberger," by Dave Longaberger (HarperBusiness; $25). With little fanfare, and just two days after it went on sale, it showed up on the *Times* nonfiction best-seller list. A week later, it was No. 1.

Longaberger, who died two years ago, was the founder of the Longaberger Company, which is the largest manufacturer of handwoven baskets—picnic baskets, laundry baskets, you name it—in America. The baskets are made in Ohio out of maplewood and are personally signed by their weavers. Last year, the company sold something like forty thousand baskets a day—almost half a billion dollars' worth.

Longaberger isn't just a company. It's the heart of a thriving subculture, like Dungeons & Dragons or the Grateful Dead. Longaberger fans buy, sell, and trade Longaberger baskets as collectibles. (At press time, there were about eight thousand Longaberger items being auctioned on eBay, including a 1986 Two Pie Basket, which was going for four hundred and fifty dollars, and a 1998 Bakers Bounty Basket Combo, for sixty dollars.) Their mecca is Newark, Ohio, where Longaberger has its headquarters, in a seven-story building shaped like a picnic basket, and nearby Dresden, where the company has built an entertainment complex called the Longaberger Homestead. And they convene at what Longaberger calls "home shows"—the basket equivalent of Tupperware parties. Seventy thousand Longaberger "sales associates" regularly throw these home shows in every state in America. There are more Longabergerian proselytizers than there are Mormon missionaries.

Here's how the home shows work. A Longaberger salesperson (typically a middle-aged woman working part time) gets another woman (typically someone who's already a Longaberger fan) to host a basket party. In exchange, the hostess gets exclusive access to certain products. All she has to do is invite over friends, relatives, and neighbors, some of whom probably already own Longaberger baskets, too, and encourage them to exchange stories about how they have used, or might someday use, the different kinds of baskets. (One kind of basket might be left at the foot of the stairs to carry stuff up; another might make an elegant centerpiece.) The parties are as much about sociability as about commerce—if such a difference still exists.

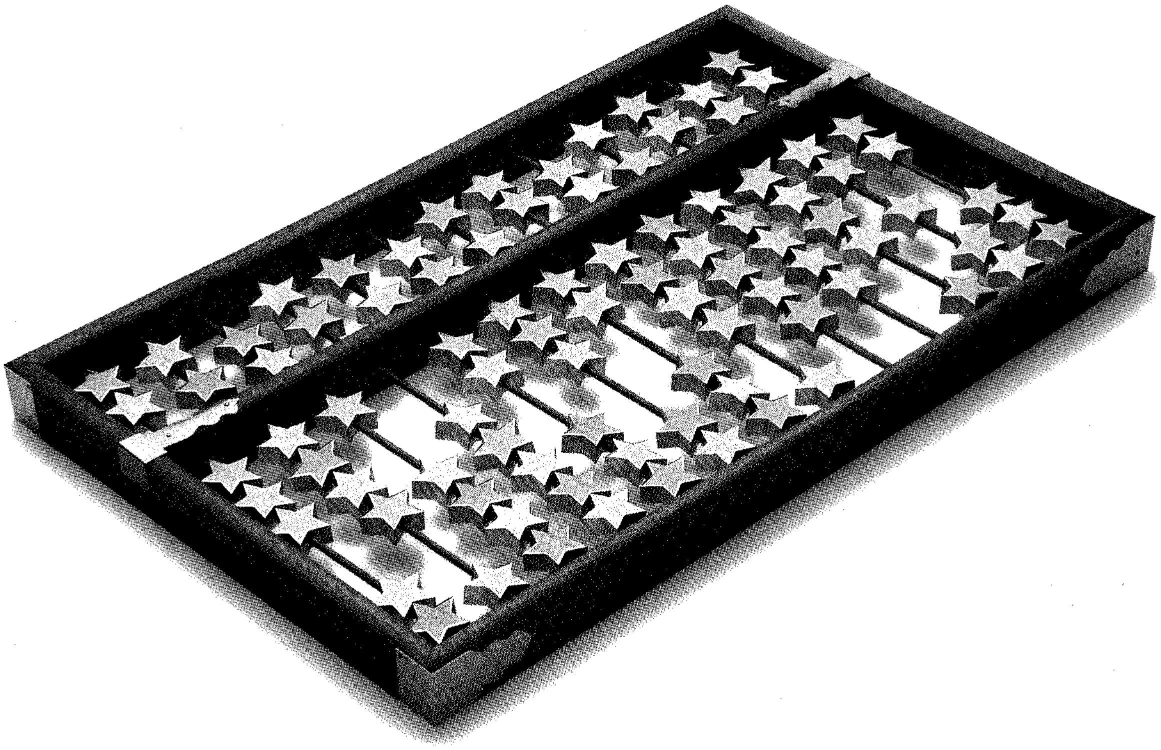
The genius of the home-party strategy is that if you couple it with a product that people really like (and, apparently, people really like baskets), your customers essentially sell the product to each other. New customers come to Longaberger almost entirely through existing customers; word of mouth—the most effective engine for sales—is built into the company's DNA. It's a textbook example of what's known as viral marketing, which the Internet, with its exponential reach, has made one of the hottest concepts in business today.

Viral marketing, it turns out, can help sell books, too. In January, before the Longaberger memoir hit stores, the company summoned its eighteen hundred sales managers to its annual meeting, in Columbus, and encouraged them to pre-order the book and to start talking it up at basket parties. Over the next couple of months, the Longabergerians arranged displays at bookstores and libraries, organized calling chains (you call one friend, she calls one friend, and so on), and set up special luncheons with their best customers to talk about the book. They receive no commissions from pushing the book (all the money is going to charity), yet thousands of them have signed up to do so, receiving special kits with promotional materials arranged on easel boards. By the time the book appeared, in early March, the market was primed.

Nonetheless, the success of the book has startled everyone involved. Will "Longaberger" be the next "Iacocca"? Who knows? What we do know is that there are so many Longabergerians out there that the book can keep selling even if it never tips into a mass audience. Somehow, a company selling a nineteenth-century product in a mid-twentieth-century manner has turned out to be a master in the twenty-first-century art of viral marketing. The home party, that campy relic of the Cleaver years, may be the ideal mechanism for winning the hearts and minds of American consumers. New Economy evangelists, take note: while cutting-edge companies attempt to use online chat rooms to transform customers into salesmen, Longaberger has proved that the living room works just as well.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN



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PERSONAL HISTORY

THE BASEBALL WRITER

A son goes back to spring training to find his father.

BY BILL BRYSON

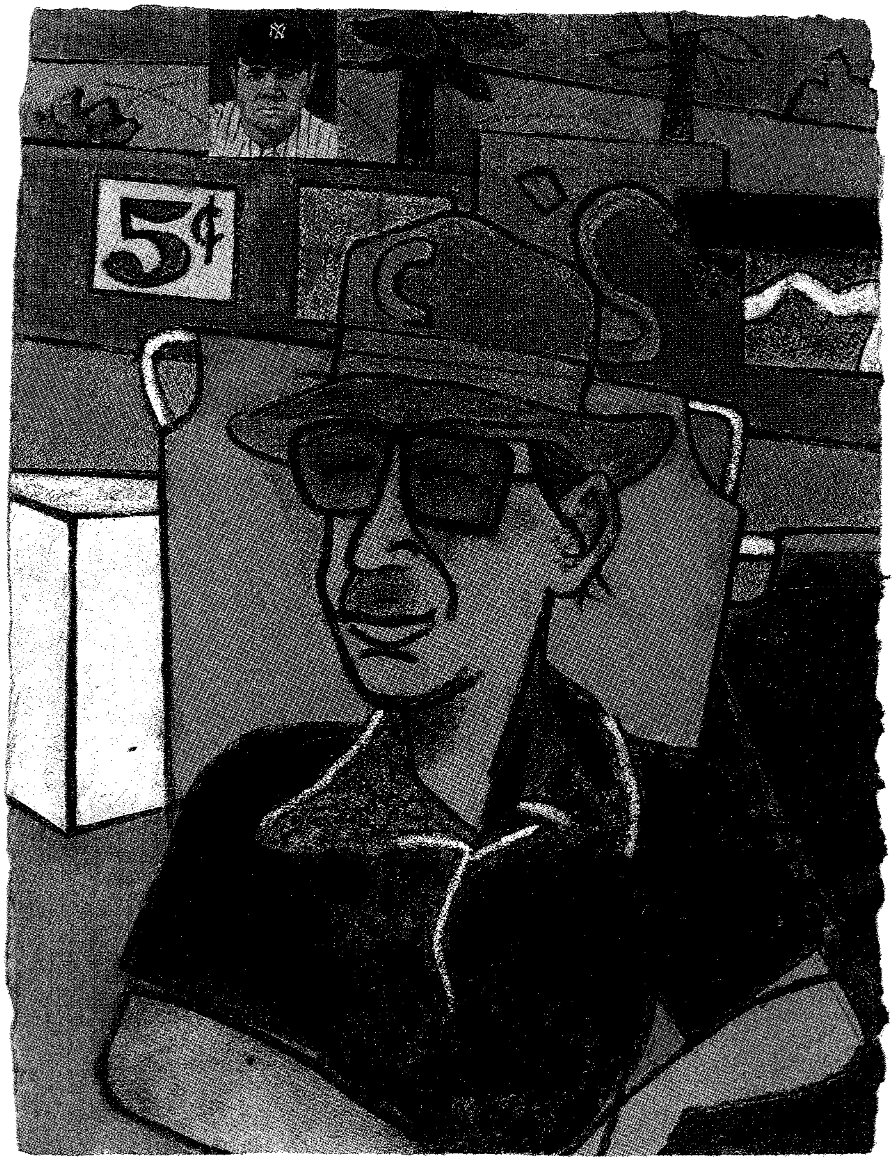
In the early nineteen-sixties, the Royal Canadian Air Force issued a pamphlet on isometrics, a form of exercise that enjoyed a short and frankly unfortunate vogue with my father, in Des Moines, Iowa. The idea of isometrics was that you used any unyielding object, like a tree or a wall, and pressed against it with all your might from various positions to tone and strengthen different groups of muscles. Since everybody already has access to trees and walls, you didn't need to invest in a lot of costly equipment, which I expect is what attracted my dad.

What made it unfortunate in my father's case is that he would do it on airplanes. At some point in every flight, he would stroll back to the galley area or the space by the emergency exit and, taking up the posture of someone trying to budge a heavy piece of machinery, an industrial printing press, say, begin to push with his shoulder or back against the outer wall of the plane, grunting the while in a low and preoccupied manner. Since it looked uncannily, if unfathomably, as if he were trying to force a hole in the side of the plane, this naturally drew attention. Businessmen would stare over the tops of their reading glasses; a stewardess would pop her head out of the galley and likewise stare, but with a certain cold caution, as if remembering some aspect of her training which she had not previously been called upon to implement.

Seeing this, my father would straighten up and smile and briefly outline the engaging principles behind isometrics. Then he would give a demonstration to an audience that swiftly consisted of no one. He seemed curiously incapable of feeling embarrassment in such situations, but that was all right, because I always felt enough for both of us—indeed, enough for us and all the other passengers, the airline and its employees, and the whole of whatever state we were flying over.

Two things made these undertakings tolerable. The first was that back on solid ground my dad wasn't half as foolish. The second was that the purpose of these trips was always to go to a big city, stay in a nice hotel, and attend ballgames, and that excused a very great deal. My dad was a sportswriter for the Des Moines *Register* and often took me along on trips through the Midwest. Sometimes these were car trips to places like Sioux City or Cedar Rapids, but at least once a summer, sometimes more, we flew to St. Louis or Milwaukee or Chicago to take in a home stand. It was a kind of working holiday for my dad.

Baseball was part of a simpler universe in those days, and I was allowed to go with him into the clubhouse and dugout and even onto the field before the games. I had my hair tousled by Stan Musial. I handed Willie Mays a ball that had skittered past him while playing catch. I lent my binoculars to Harvey Kuenn so that he could scope some distant blonde in the lower deck. I sat in a nearly airless clubhouse beside Ernie Banks, naked but for a towel, as he autographed box after box of new white baseballs, each box containing a dozen balls. When he had finished with one



Salty asked, "Did you ever hear the story about me and your dad and Babe Ruth?"

box, I would hand him another, and he would thank me with a kindly smile. I knew my life was blessed.

My father, meanwhile, would be off schmoozing with the players and coaches (possibly, I fear, demonstrating isometrics to them). You could see at once that he was in his element, as well he should be, for he was a born sportswriter, perhaps one of the finest of his generation. At a time when a great deal of provincial sportswriting was leaden or read as if written by enthusiastic but minimally gifted fourteen-year-olds, he wrote prose that was thoughtful, literate, and comparatively sophisticated. "Neat but not gaudy," he would always say, with a certain air of satisfaction, as he pulled the last sheet out of the typewriter.

Most of his working life was taken up with Iowa sports, but twice a year—for spring training and the World Series—he ventured into a wider world. Few could touch him at writing against a deadline. Here, for instance, is the opening paragraph of the story that ran in the *Times* on October 14, 1960, after one of the most dramatic concluding moments in World Series history:

> The Pirates today brought Pittsburgh its first world series baseball championship in thirty-five years when Bill Mazeroski slammed a ninth-inning home run high over the left-field wall of historic Forbes Field.

And here is what people in Iowa read:

> The most hallowed piece of property in Pittsburgh baseball history left Forbes Field late Thursday afternoon under a dirty gray sports jacket and with police escort.
>
> That, of course, was home plate, where Bill Mazeroski completed his electrifying home run while Umpire Bill Jackowski, broad back braced and arms spread, held off the mob long enough for Bill to make it legal. . . .
>
> Pittsburgh's steel mills couldn't have made more noise than the crowd in this ancient park did when Mazeroski smashed Yankee Ralph Terry's second pitch of the ninth inning. . . .
>
> By the time [the ball] sailed over the ivy-covered brick wall, the rush from the stands had begun and these sudden madmen threatened to keep Maz from touching the plate with the run that beat the lordly Yankees, 10–9, for the title.

Bear in mind that the story was written not at leisure but amid the din and distraction of a crowded press box in the immediate aftermath of the game. Nor could a single thought or neat phrase within it (like "broad back braced and arms spread") have been prepared in advance and casually dropped into the text. Since Mazeroski's home run rudely upended a nation's confident expectations of a victory by the "lordly Yankees" (my father might, on reflection, have had that one ready), every sportswriter present had to discard whatever he'd had in mind to say, even one batter earlier, and start afresh.

Anyway, search as you will, I don't believe you'll find a better World Series game report on file anywhere, unless it was another one of my dad's. Perhaps I overstate things—this is my father, after all—but if so it is not an entirely private opinion. Last year in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, Michael Gartner, a former president of NBC News, who grew up in Des Moines, wrote that my father, the original Bill Bryson, "may have been the best baseball writer ever, anywhere." Unaccountably—well, unaccountably to me—my father was happy to spend his career in a minor-league city. It appears he had everything you could need to be a big-league writer except the need to be a big-league writer.

Still, he saw a great deal. For thirty-two years, from 1944 to his retirement, in 1976, he covered every game of every World Series and so witnessed many of baseball's greatest moments—Al Gionfriddo's miraculous one-handed catch of a Joe DiMaggio drive in 1947, Don Larsen's perfect game in 1956, Mazeroski's timely clout of 1960. In 1951, when the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants finished a wild season tied for first place in the National League, prompting a hastily organized playoff series, the *Register* took its initial coverage from the Associated Press. In those days, playoffs, when they happened at all, were effectively an extension of regular-season play, something the *Register* wouldn't normally cover itself, so there was nothing peculiar in my father's not being sent. However, he must have lobbied hard to go, because by the third game he was there—and that, as every fan knows, was the game in which Bobby Thomson, of the Giants, stepped to the plate in the bottom of the ninth, with his team trailing by two runs, and lofted a three-run homer into the left-field grandstand, earning a measure of immortality for himself and a pennant for his team. I

RICHARD MERKIN

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hesitate to suggest that Bobby Thomson wouldn't have hit that home run had my father not been there. But he wouldn't.

For my dad, the World Series was an almost reverential event, which called for the most particular packing and preparation. (He was something of a clotheshorse on the quiet; there is a photograph of him from the nineteen-forties in two-tone shoes and the nearest approximation to a zoot suit ever seen in Iowa.) But spring training was something else altogether—a kind of journalist's equivalent of spring break. It didn't have the same pressure of deadlines and the breathless competition of the World Series. My dad became conspicuously chipper in the days before leaving for Southern climes. He whistled. He grew playful with my mother. Then he disappeared for a month or so, and when he came home he was tanned and dressed in something unexpectedly lively. It can't be, but in my mind's eye I see him stepping from a DC-3 in a Hawaiian shirt with a string of flowers around his neck.

In the early years, as I recall, he went to Florida, but later on—by about 1970—he was going to Arizona. Mesa, just outside Phoenix, was the winter seat of the Chicago Cubs, the team most widely followed in Iowa, and of Des Moines's own minor-league team, the Iowa Oaks, as they were then called. He stayed at an old hotel on Main Street called the Maricopa Inn, ate breakfast each morning at a local institution called Guggy's Coffee Shop, and from there strolled the few blocks to the ballpark and the training facilities. Except for a childhood trip to the Grand Canyon, I had never been to Arizona, so any mental impressions were necessarily bolstered by images from cowboy movies. I imagined Mesa's Main Street being dusty and having wooden sidewalks, and vaguely pictured the ballplayers playing in a desert setting on a field dotted with rocks and saguaro cactuses.

For as long as I could remember, I had harbored an urge to see it myself. By chance, on a trip to Chicago last November, I ran into an old family friend named Salty Saltwell and his wife, Betty. Salty had been a great pal of my dad's. Salty was from Iowa, too, and had met my dad in the late nineteen-forties while working in the front office of the Sioux City Soos, a minor-league baseball team. In 1958, Salty had taken an executive job with the Cubs, and eventually he became general manager. I hadn't seen him in nearly forty years and my instinct upon seeing him again was to say, "But you should have died years ago," for Salty had seemed fairly ancient to me when I was small. In fact, he had been in his thirties. (He is seventy-six now.)

For all the famous ballplayers I met, Salty was actually my childhood hero in the major leagues. He was the ballplayers' boss, which made him the nearest thing to God. He had the office of a banker: dark wood panelling, desk like an aircraft carrier, an intercom for bringing people running. And—how glorious was this!—it was in Wrigley Field. Whenever he wanted, he could rise from the cares of management, open his office door, and be in a major-league ballpark, amid the noise and happiness and popcorn smells of a ballgame. I didn't think that life could offer any finer employment. In 1959, while we were sitting in his office, he said to me, "Oh, Billy, I've got something here you might like," and he handed me a box containing a gleamingly new, singularly complete set of Topps baseball cards for the year. He was a kind and classy man, the quintessence of all that was splendid about baseball.

In the course of a brief conversation, Salty told me that he had retired, but that he and Betty still went to spring training in Arizona every year. That settled it. To Mesa I would go. Though these days I am, by dint of residence, a Red Sox fan, I would for old times' sake attach myself to Salty and his beloved Cubs.

Before I moved to New Hampshire, in 1995, I lived for twenty years in England. If my experience is anything to go by, when you return to your native land after being away a long time, you find yourself mildly but permanently out of step on certain matters. I cannot, for instance, reliably recall which league some of the newer major-league expansion teams are in. It is as much as I can do to remember that the Braves are no longer in Milwaukee.

In much the same way, I am prone to be startled by features of contemporary life that others no doubt would find unexceptionable—Mesa, Arizona, for instance. If the purpose of the modern American suburb is to make sure that no citizen is ever more than five hundred yards from a food product featuring melted cheese, then Mesa cannot be faulted. I, however, was expecting to find an agreeable little community broadly on the model of those we used to produce routinely and more or less effortlessly in America. Mesa seemed to consist almost exclusively of parking lots that would exhaust a horse to cross.

Only the modest downtown, with its tidy one- and two-story buildings, hinted at the charm that had so engaged my father, but it was almost eerily forlorn, the sidewalks empty, the few remaining shops clearly longing for customers—even, in some cases, a customer. Failing to find the Maricopa Inn or Guggy's, I wandered into the library and was directed to the Mesa Room, a repository of local history, where I was assisted by a cheerful lady named Nancy Dana Norton.

"Oh, I'm afraid Mesa isn't quite the place your father would have known," she said, with a trace of melancholy. The Maricopa Inn and Guggy's were long gone. Mesa's population, she told me, had grown more than tenfold in forty years, from thirty-four thousand in 1960 to more than four hundred thousand, but now all its life is on the fringes. On a shelf she found an album of old photos of Mesa—shots of a busy Main Street, aerial views of a compact community surrounded by orange groves and ranches, an abundance of Mission-style buildings that had escaped my notice in my stroll around town.

"No, you wouldn't have seen them," Ms. Norton said. "Most of them are gone now."

I asked her what had made Mesa change so. "Well," she said, "the real boom dates from 1979, when we were named an All-America community. That's when people started to move here in really large numbers, because naturally everyone wants to live in an attractive place."

It was much the same when I caught up with Salty the next morning. He has been coming to Mesa since 1959, and as we drove to the Cubs' facilities on Center Street—a stadium at HoHoKam Park and a training camp a half mile or so away, at Fitch Park—he pointed out all the things that once were and no longer are. "That used to be citrus groves for as far as you could see," he said, pointing across an expanse of tiled roofs and jumbo signs. "That was all cotton fields over there. And that's where the old ballpark used to be."

"Why did they tear it down?" I asked.

"Just got old, I guess. There used to be a public swimming pool just beyond the left-field fence. Every time somebody hit a home run out there, the ball would land in the water."

We stopped at the camp first. I had never been in a clubhouse that didn't smell powerfully of liniment, foot powder, damp towels, and whatever forty or so male bodies could exude in the course of an active day. Memory does strange things, but I vividly remember the Cubs' dressing room in the early sixties as being oppressively hot and lit by no more than a scattering of bare, weakly radiant bulbs. The ceiling was simply the underside of the stepped metal grandstand above.

Salty took me on a brisk tour of the Cubs' current spring quarters, and every inch of it had the clean, well-maintained, impersonal feel of a Holiday Inn. The four large interconnected dressing rooms, the weight and exercise room, the eating areas, the conference rooms, even the laundry and storage areas, were tidy and odorless. Outside, paths led through a manicured landscape to batting cages and warmup areas, and, beyond, to four full-sized, serenely perfect playing fields. It was a little Elysium devoted exclusively to health, comfort, and baseball.

By this point, the second week of March, it was the province of the Cubs' farm teams. The Cubs themselves had vacated it a few days earlier and moved up the road to their new stadium. The baseball stadiums I spent my childhood in seemed to be built of iron and girders and outsized rivets, as if they had been recycled from old battleships, but the new Dwight Patterson Stadium at HoHoKam Park, as it is formally known, was soft and curving, like a nice piece of furniture. It cost twenty-eight million dollars when it was built, in 1997. The Cubs use it for a month each year and in a typical year play fifteen to eighteen exhibition games in it.

Batting practice was in progress, the players gathered around a big wheeled cage positioned at home plate. We sat in the shade along the first-base line. In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, Salty was telling me, nearly all the ballplayers stayed at the club's designated hotel. "The hotels loved it because it drew a lot of fans to the hotel, and the fans loved it because they could see their favorite players lounging around the pool or breakfasting in the coffee shop or whatever. Now, with the per diems they get, the players can afford to rent a house or a condo."

TRAVEL
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"It's as beautiful as the poster, except, of course, no more cows."

You have to admire the Cubs. They are the only franchise in baseball, probably in the whole of sport, whose success is built on failure. The last time they won a World Series, in 1908, Teddy Roosevelt was President. The last time they appeared in a World Series was 1945. In the fifty-six years since, they have had just thirteen winning seasons. Last year, they lost almost a hundred games, tying Philadelphia for the worst record in the major leagues. So nearly certain is their annual collapse that a fan once held up a sign on opening day that said "Wait Till Next Year."

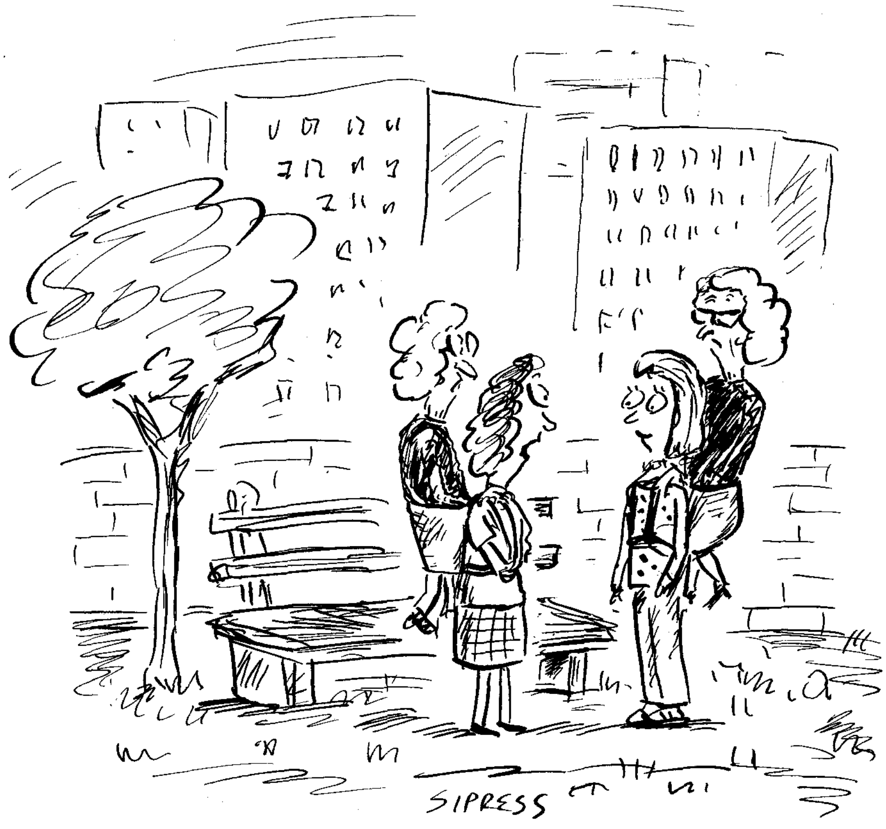
Yet their fan base remains one of the most faithful in baseball. In the 2000 season, the Cubs attracted 2.7 million paying customers. The year before, when they were nearly as bad, they drew 2.8 million. And at spring training they are almost without peer. They attracted more than a hundred and thirty-seven thousand fans to thirteen preseason home games last year—the sort of full-season attendance that our old minor-league team in Des Moines used to get in peak years.

I was at once amazed and charmed that several thousand people were prepared to pay good money—up to fourteen dollars a seat—to watch a baseball game that has no real purpose, between two teams that may never meet in a real season. Spring training is a strange pastime, when you think about it, in that you aren't watching people doing their job but, rather, preparing to do their job. It is a little like watching Katie Couric getting her hair done or Dan Rather shaving.

Still, in the week I spent in Mesa, I enjoyed myself immensely. There really is something wholesome about spring training, and I am sure it is the underlying pointlessness of it all—that these games don't count for anything, won't be remembered—that gives spring training its noble qualities. Certainly, it was disarming to discover that I have reached a time of life when I can sit and happily watch any two teams play. And there is, of course, a real pleasure in watching Sammy Sosa knock a ball four hundred and fifty feet through the air, whether it goes into the record books or not.

When the Cubs were playing, I went to the game and sat with Salty and Betty, and we talked mostly about our families. On the days when the Cubs weren't playing, or were on the road, I would go alone to Fitch Park and watch the minor leaguers. I believe I enjoyed this most of all. There is an appealing air of hopefulness and possibility in a minor-league camp. Before me, spread across the four fields, were some hundred and fifty young players, most of whom would never make it to the major leagues and all of whom didn't yet know it. Sometimes when the players were engaged in the duller drills—a particular preoccupation with bunting became evident by midweek, and no doubt rightly, as most of the players seemed to be useless at it—I would browse through the official Cubs information guide, a three-hundred-and-twenty-page compilation of team history and statistics. Baseball is the most statistically obsessed of all human pursuits, and there was enough in the guide to provide hours of absorption.

The one thing the Cubs handbook never mentions is salaries, which is perhaps understandable but a little odd, since earnings are clearly the central issue in baseball today. In the late nineteen-sixties, Ernie Banks made about eighty-five thousand dollars a season. Today, Sammy Sosa makes nearly that amount every game. He will be paid twelve million dollars this year—by no means a stunning salary these days—which works out to roughly seventeen thousand dollars every time he steps to the plate. No wonder the kids in front of me were hustling.



"Seventy-seven. How about yours?"

The Cubs' AAA farm team is the Iowa Cubs, of Des Moines, so I always wore an Iowa baseball cap to the minor-league practices in the certain knowledge that this would prompt conversations. (Iowans love to talk to other Iowans in distant places.) I passed most of one morning with a guy from Cedar Falls, who said this was his eleventh straight trip to spring training since retirement, and another with a couple from Fort Dodge, and yet another with a couple from Mount Pleasant, not far from where my dad grew up. They were all old enough to remember my dad.

We talked a lot about how baseball had changed. Nobody seemed to resent the players' mammoth salaries, but there was quite a lot of anger—"a lot of disgustment," as the lady from Fort Dodge put it, looking a little disgustmented herself—about the quality of management in baseball these days, and an apparent unanimity of view that there will be a strike next year. I asked the guy from Cedar Falls what he would do next March if there was no spring training.

"Oh, probably just come and sit in an empty park." I grinned and he said at once, "No, I'm serious. I've been thinking about it. When you consider the difference between looking at a baseball field full of guys bunting for two hours and a baseball field where nothing's going on at all—well, there's not a whole lot in it really, is there?"

Naturally, I regretted very much that my father wasn't there—he died in 1986—because I would have loved to know what he made of everything: the salaries and skills of players now, the pleasures of spring training today compared with in his day, where I should direct my annoyance if there is a strike next year. But I can only guess what he would say.

When I was in high school, my dad came to me one day with a letter from the American Association baseball league inviting him to be the official scorer for the Des Moines team that year. It was a fairly responsible appointment and paid fifteen dollars a game—good money back then.

"You want to do it?" he asked.

"Seriously?" I said. It occurred to me that there might be some objections to this at league headquarters.

"Well," he said, furrowing his brow and studying the letter, "it appears they want somebody named Bill Bryson to do it." He gave me a little grin. "It doesn't actually say which Bill Bryson."

I learned to score baseball—I mean, really learned it—and for the next five years I sat in the press box beside my dad for every home game. It occurs to me now that in all the thousands of hours we sat together in press boxes, both in my days as the unofficial official scorer for the Des Moines team and all the games we went to together through my childhood, we never really talked baseball. I can't recall an occasion when he boasted even in passing about all that he had seen and done. I had no idea until long after his death, for instance, that he had seen Bobby Thomson's home run. The things I have written about here I know about because I read the files, not because he ever mentioned them. I ached for information about him.

So I was all ears when, on my next-to-last day in Mesa, Salty turned to me as we sat watching the Cubs clobbering the White Sox and out of the blue said, "Did you ever hear the story about me and your dad and Babe Ruth?"

"Why, no," I replied.

"It was in July of 1948. I was working for the ball club in Sioux City and your dad was in town with the Des Moines team, I guess. Anyway, he called me up one morning and asked me if I wanted to meet Babe Ruth. Well, I thought it was one of his jokes—your dad could be something of a joker, you know—but in fact he was serious. Babe Ruth was flying into Sioux City that afternoon to attend the state American Legion championships at Spencer."

"Babe Ruth went to American Legion games in Iowa?" I asked.

"He was doing a lot of work for Ford in those days, and Ford was one of the big sponsors of American Legion ball. So anyway Ruth flies in and we're at the airport with the American Legion officials waiting for him. He looked terrible—just a shadow of a man. He had throat cancer at the time, you see, and you could tell that the trip had taken a lot out of him. He asked us if there was somewhere that he could rest for a while, so we went with him to the old Warrior Hotel in Sioux City and he had a nap for about an hour and afterward we had a very pleasant meeting with him in his room.

"Your dad got his interview and Ruth autographed a baseball for me. I took a picture of him signing it and gave the film to your dad to use in the *Register* the next day with his story. I never did get a print of the picture, but I've still got the ball somewhere. That night, Ruth went to the Legion games and wasn't very well at all. The next day, he flew back to New York and went straight into the hospital. He never came out. He died the next month."

It took me a moment to absorb this.

"Are you saying, Salty, that my dad had the last interview that Babe Ruth ever gave?"

He thought for a moment, as if this side of the matter had never occurred to him. "Well, yes, I suppose he did. I guess he must have."

There is a famous photograph that shows Babe Ruth standing by home plate in Yankee Stadium, cap in hand and slightly stooped, receiving a farewell ovation from forty-nine thousand adoring fans. It is one of the most moving photographs in sports. Without knowing anything about Babe Ruth or the game he played (I tested this on my English wife), you can deduce at once that this is a moment of supreme tribute to a man who had been great and was loved. It was his last visit to Yankee Stadium and his last time in a Yankee uniform.

One week later, to the day, Babe Ruth sat in a hotel room in Sioux City, Iowa, with my dad and Salty Saltwell. It was June of 1948, not July, but otherwise the facts are just as Salty related them to me. Ruth was frail, but cheerful. "It was a shock at first seeing the gaunt, shrunken giant emerge from the plane and walk with that shambling gait to the terminal building at the Sioux City airport," my father's story began. It wasn't by any means the best story my father ever wrote, but it was a sympathetic and affecting portrait. Three days later, Ruth entered Memorial Hospital in New York, and there he died on August 16th, eight weeks and one day after his interview with my father.

During that period, he did leave the hospital at least once, in late July, when he attended the world première of the movie "The Babe Ruth Story," and clearly he would have spoken to reporters then. Still, if my father's wasn't the last formal interview Babe Ruth ever gave, it was certainly one of the last. It is difficult to be sure of details, because most Ruth biographers skim over the period between his farewell at Yankee Stadium and his death. Few even mention that final trip to the Midwest. (He went, incidentally, because he needed the money to pay for his medical treatment.) Certainly none appear to have troubled to check out an interview Ruth gave to a man from the Des Moines *Register* not long before he died.

From time to time when I was growing up, my father would ask us at the dinner table how we felt about moving to St. Louis or San Francisco or some other big-league city. The *Chronicle* or *Examiner* or *Post-Dispatch*, he would inform us somberly, had just lost its baseball writer—he always made it sound as if the person had not returned from a mission, like a Second World War airman—and the position was being offered to him.

"Money's pretty good, too," he would say with a look of frank consternation, as if surprised that one could be paid for routinely attending major-league baseball games.

I was always for it. When I was small, I was taken with the idea of having a dad working in a field where people evidently went missing from time to time. Then, later, it was more a desire to pass what remained of my youth in a place—anyplace at all—where daily hog prices were not regarded as breaking news and corn yields were never mentioned.

But it never happened. Now that I am older, I can see the appeal of Iowa. It is wholesome, reliable, and rooted—not unlike baseball. Maybe that's what held him there. Had he worked for a bigger newspaper, I have no doubt my father would have been one of the great baseball writers of his day. Because we stayed, the world never got a chance to see what he could do. Nor, of course, did he. In both cases, I can't help feeling that they didn't know what they were missing. ♦

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DIRTY LAUNDRY

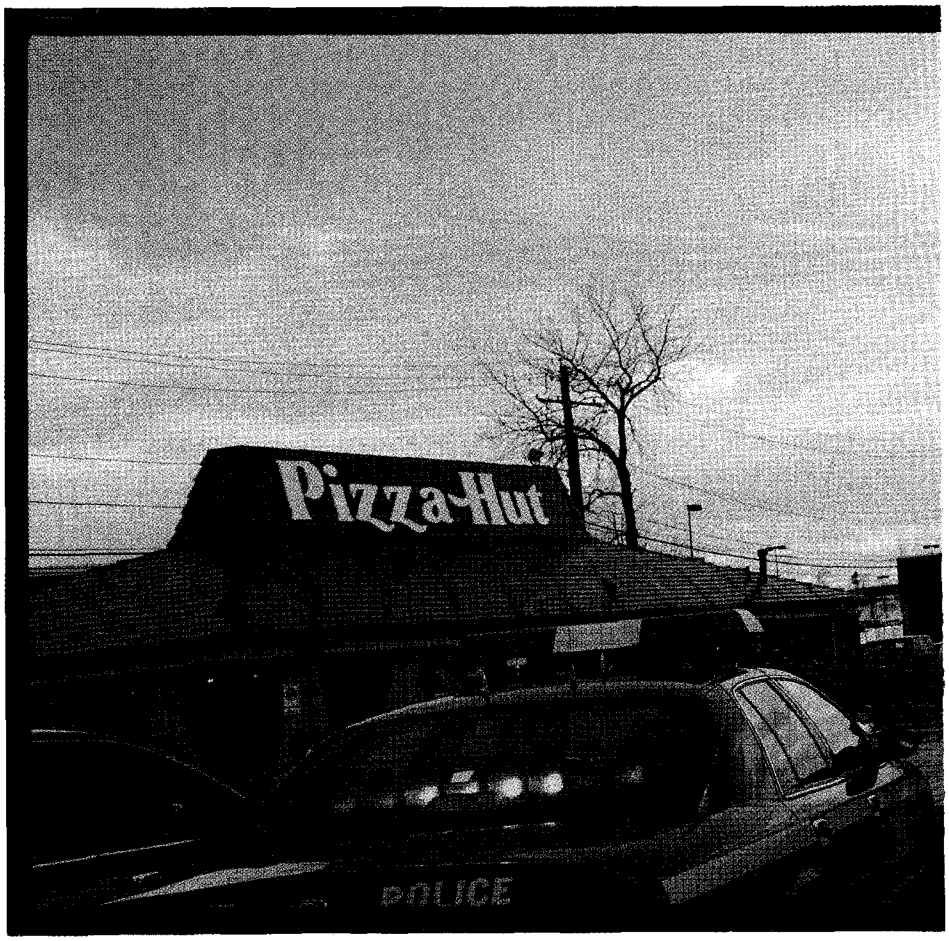
In a town made of strip malls, the police run amok.

BY MARK SINGER

TOWN OF WALLKILL, NEW YORK

Growing up in the nineteen-fifties in Middletown, New York, Oscar Dino always assumed he'd wind up working for Dino Real Estate, his father's residential-brokerage firm, and he was right about that. In the early seventies, he took over the business and began to specialize in commercial appraisals, property management, and leasing. That this wasn't the most exciting life imaginable suited him fine; Oscar Dino wasn't about taking big risks. Otherwise, why stay put in Middletown, a stolid, unpicturesque, smokestack-vintage little city in Orange County, eighty miles northwest of New York City, along the route to the dwindling Borscht Belt resorts of the Catskill Mountains? Dino married in his early twenties, began raising a family, and went about the steady routines of being a reputable middle-of-the-road Republican middle-class citizen of Middletown. Now in his mid-fifties, he looks and sounds the part—tall, gray-haired, pleasantly handsome, neatly pressed, with a friendly, earnest manner and slightly stilted diction, a man fully aware of who he is and where he comes from.

Dino had a comfortable familiarity with small-town rituals and obligations, and he rarely declined when asked to donate his time and expertise to community organizations. Across the years, he served as co-chair of a Middletown rezoning



At first, the police department's trespasses—come-ons to women at traffic stops, stalking, committee, president of the Middletown Lions Club, chairman of the local chapter of the American Cancer Society, and a board member of the Chamber of Commerce. In the early eighties, he moved to Wallkill, a semirural suburb that surrounds Middletown (in a configuration that resembles a doughnut with a bite taken out of it). During the summer of 1996, he was invited to become a police commissioner—a member of the civilian council that monitored the Wallkill Police Department. An uncle of Dino's had been a detective on the Middletown police force and the first Italian-American in the department to become a lieutenant, an achievement that entitled him to exalted status in the family. It followed, naturally, that Dino always maintained a respectful attitude toward policemen, so when the commission appointment materialized he unhesitatingly said yes. Today, he says, unambiguously, "If I knew then what I know now, I never would have taken this job."

Last January, Eliot Spitzer, the New York State Attorney General, sued the Town of Wallkill in federal court, alleging assorted thuggishness, petty corruption, and violations of constitutional rights by members of its police department, who posed a "serious and continuing danger to both the citizens of Wallkill and to all other New Yorkers who travel through the jurisdiction." The lawsuit was the first of its kind ever directed against a police department in New York State—justified, in the Attorney General's estimation, because an entire institution, comprising twenty-seven officers, had careered out of control and because the people whose duty it was to rectify the situation had looked the other way. That several members of the Wallkill P. D. possessed what amounted to an attitude problem was well known long before the Attorney General stepped in, and Dino knew it better than anyone. Indeed, the Wallkill Police Commission had invited the state's scrutiny after concluding that the key players in the Wallkill government had no intention of cleaning up the town's mess.

The Attorney General's complaint catalogued, among other offenses, instances of sexually predatory behavior. With bizarre brazenness, Wallkill cops pulled over young women on traffic stops—"driving while blond" seemed to be the primary infraction—and solicited dates in return for dropping falsified charges. They shined flashlights on women's breasts, and suggested to out-of-town women that they spend the night in local motels. One officer distributed baseball-card photographs of himself. The department owned an unmarked "stealth car"—devoid of roof lights or conspicuous insignia that would identify it as a police vehicle—which made such traffic stops especially frightening. A woman who felt she was being stalked by an officer told the Attorney General's investigators how, in one encounter, he recited each item she'd bought the previous day at the grocery store. Another officer showed up frequently at an ice-cream parlor, where he made sexually suggestive comments to the young female employees and, more than once, grabbed a sixteen-year-old waitress around the waist and hips as she bent over to clean tables.

Traffic stops were also a means of carrying out vendettas. For instance, after

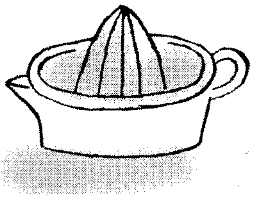
bullying—didn't merit a response. "The guy didn't murder anybody," a town official said of an officer. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

the Middletown *Times Herald-Record* published articles describing an epidemic of "double-dipping"—cops filling out time cards, as if on duty, when they were actually employed at other jobs—seven of its delivery-truck drivers were pulled over in a single night. Wallkill's elected officials, for their part, didn't seem all that disturbed by the double-dipping. One article quoted the town supervisor as saying of a cop involved, "The guy didn't murder anybody." It was that combination of cavalier abuse of authority and official cynicism which prompted the Attorney General to petition the federal court to appoint a receiver, or overseer, to restore order. Because, clearly, the Wallkill Police Department was disinclined to police itself.

When Dino was asked to join the four-member police commission, he was told that among his qualifications was his lack of a political agenda and lack of a background in law enforcement. Immediately, he became the commission chairman, and before long helped resolve a vexing personnel problem. For eight years, the police chief had been a retired state trooper who was an unregenerate sexist. Confronted with a sexual-discrimination complaint by two women officers, the chief offered a smug defense that he "treated men just as bad as women." Civil-service rules made getting rid of him cumbersome, but, finally, in the fall of 1996, Dino and another newly appointed commissioner came up with a pretext, and the chief accepted a severance package.

Wallkill is governed by an elected town board of five members, only one of whom, the town supervisor, occupies a full-time, salaried position. The town board, in turn, appoints the police commission, which is responsible for setting policies that insure discipline within the department and for hiring and firing. Before Dino could mobilize a formal search for a new police chief, the town supervisor, Howard Mills, announced that he'd found the man for the job—James Coscette, a local boy who'd become a Wallkill cop a few years after graduating from high school. He was well liked by his colleagues and well acquainted with the simple dictates that shaped Wallkill politics: Republicans ran the show in a nonideological but wholly partisan manner, and a go-along-to-get-along attitude was a necessary lubricant. Though the selection of Coscette hadn't followed the sort of deliberate process Dino had expected, he deferred to Mills. In his own go-along-to-get-along way, Dino happily presented the "Commissioner's Award" to Coscette at the Police Benevolent Association dinner in 1997. He made a point of extolling the new chief for restoring the esprit de corps. Morale had got a boost, as well, from the purchase of new uniforms (navy-blue outfits, identical to those worn by the Los Angeles Police Department, replaced gray getups with Dudley Do-Right cowboy hats) and new patrol cars (black instead of white). When Coscette decided there was still room for sartorial improvement, he added three gold stars to each of his lapels.

In the spring of 1998, Coscette was publicly reprimanded by Mills after the *Times Herald-Record* ran a story about an essay he'd contributed to a town employees' newsletter. The topic was Mother's Day, and Coscette sounded as if the previous chief had been his ghostwriter: "All over America, men are being forced to carry out the daily chores that Moms usually do." For the typical overburdened husband, this indignity was compounded at the end of the workday with the discovery that "the dishes are piled high in the kitchen sink and his wife is lying on the couch eating bonbons and watching Oprah." This failed literary endeavor was more than just an indication that the honeymoon phase of Coscette's stewardship had passed. It was inauspicious in the same way that, with the benefit of hindsight, all those gold stars on his lapels would seem inauspicious. Perhaps this latter display of self-aggrandizement was Coscette's way of trying to compensate for the fact that Wallkill's cops were the lowest paid in the county, or that their headquarters were terribly cramped, not much bigger than the average public-school classroom. Perhaps, for reasons all his own, Coscette needed to give notice that he and the Wallkill P.D. were forces to be reckoned with. Which, in the end, turned out to be true.



What passed for public policy in Wallkill was this single-minded conviction: as long as government tried to do very little, taxes would stay low and property values would appreciate. In January of 1999, Howard Mills moved from the supervisor's office to the New York State Assembly, and in his valedictory he reiterated to Dino and others that the police department should continue to be managed as it had been. The priority wasn't to cultivate a highly professional law-enforcement organization but to control the budget. You did that by adhering to a fiscal creed that, in its unapologetically parsimonious way, was either brilliant or stupid. Specifically, you hired young cops who, knowing there were more lucrative employment opportunities elsewhere, would be inclined to move on after a few years, thus sparing the town the burden of long-term pension obligations. Whenever a serious crime did occur—Wallkill averages two or three homicides a decade—the economical response would be to summon the state police for backup. (Conveniently, a New York State Police troop had a barracks in Wallkill.) Otherwise, when it came to everyday police work—traffic control, domestic disputes, minor drug offenses, shoplifting, bar fights—not much happened in Wallkill that a bunch of buffed-out Barney Fifes with a modest level of training couldn't handle.

And things hummed along more or less in that mode, it seemed to Dino, until about three years into Coscette's tenure, when evidence emerged that genuine inanity was again loose within the department. The first revelations came from other law-enforcement agencies. On Halloween night, 1999, a Wallkill couple were robbed at home, and the husband was severely beaten—the sort of crime the state police were supposed to take the lead in investigating. Wallkill cops arrived at the scene first and, when the state troopers showed up, bickered with them over jurisdiction. The Wallkill officers, who took charge of the investigation, belonged to an "élite" anticrime unit that Coscette had formed

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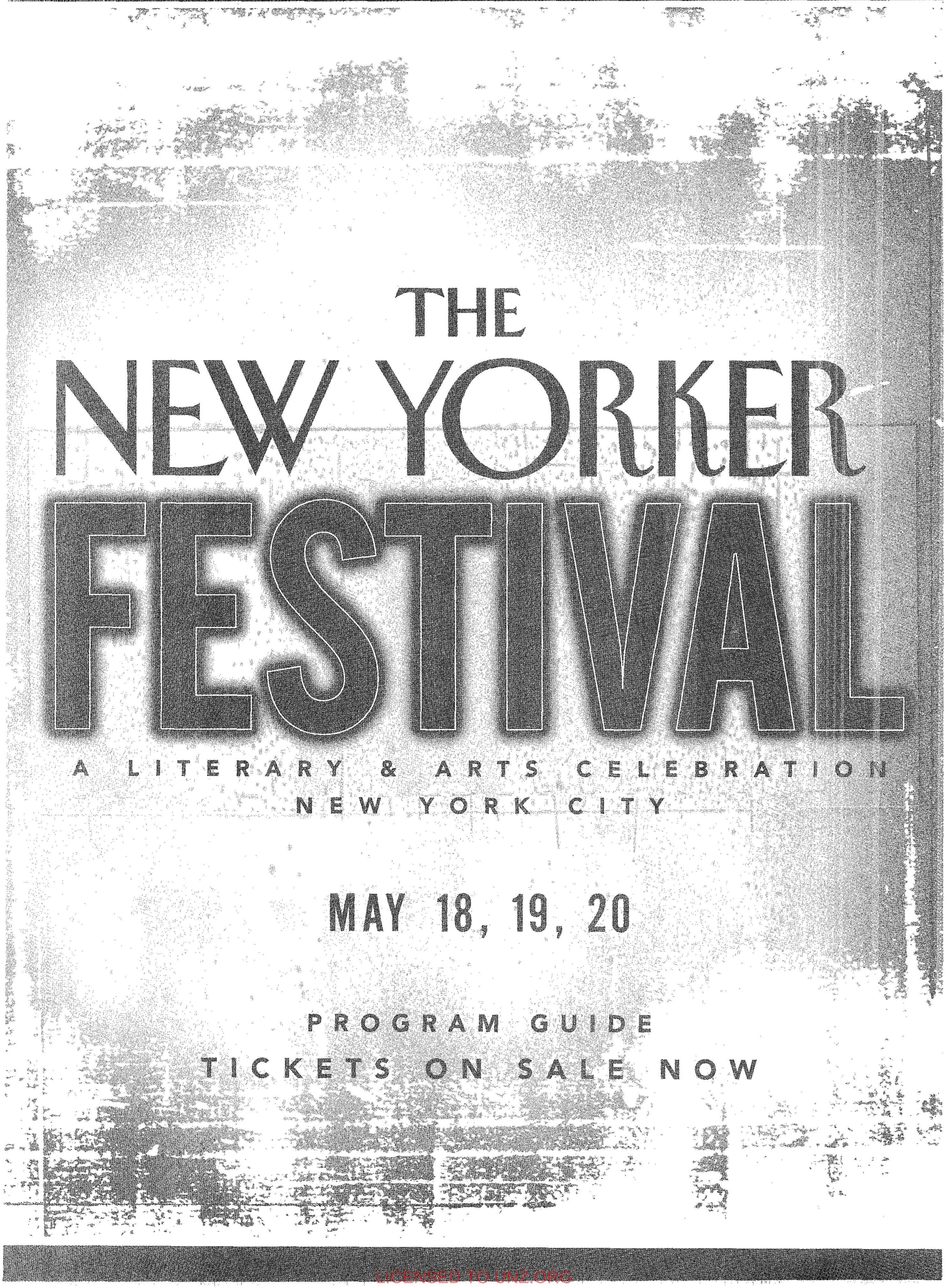

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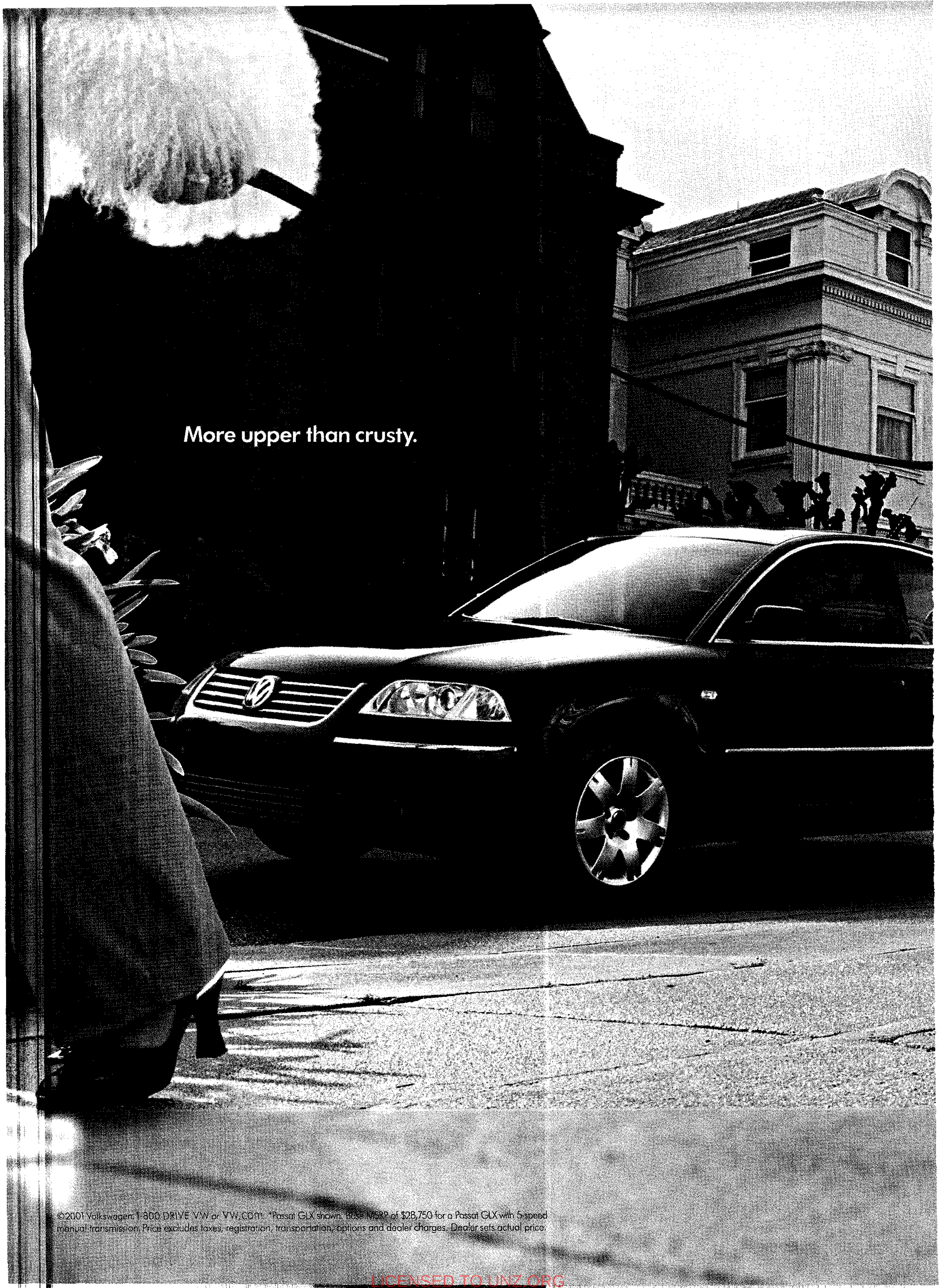

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WELCOME

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Last May, The New Yorker celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary with a weekend-long cultural festival. It was such a success that we've decided to do it again this year, with a new lineup of writers, artists, and performers. You are invited to join us.

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This year's New Yorker Festival runs from May 18th through May 20th and will include more than fifty events, from readings by some of the most gifted writers working today to a tribute to the genius of Bob Dylan.

Reading—and, we hope, reading *The New Yorker*—is a private pleasure. The New Yorker Festival is a public moment, a springtime celebration open to everyone, featuring many of the writers you read in the magazine, among them Nancy Franklin, Adam Gopnik, and Anthony Lane. The festival opens Friday, with Fiction Night: there will be fifteen readings downtown—Martin Amis, Ann Beattie, Roddy Doyle, Richard Ford, Jhumpa Lahiri, Norman Mailer, Lorrie Moore, Annie Proulx, Zadie Smith...

Friday night will also include a Broadway-theatre event with August Wilson, hosted by John Lahr.

Throughout the day on Saturday, *New Yorker* writers will interview people they've written about or join in discussions with those who interest them. Hilton Als will interview Rickie Lee Jones; David Denby will talk with Norman Mailer. There will be conversations with Woody Allen, Chuck Close, Christopher Guest, Chuck D, and others, and talks by the writers Malcolm Gladwell and Simon Schama.

There will also be panel discussions on crime writing, comedy, and war reporting; literary walking tours of midtown Manhattan; and two Saturday-night events—the High Fidelity Dance Party, with Nick Hornby spinning, and a benefit for PEN, with writers and musicians honoring the work of Bob Dylan, among them Tracy Chapman, Rick Moody, Sam Shepard, and Patti Smith.

Sunday's events will include conversations with Steve Martin and Ang Lee, more panel discussions, a talk by Calvin Trillin, and brunches with *New Yorker* cartoonists and cover artists and with the chef and author Anthony Bourdain. The festival will close with a free poetry reading by *New Yorker* poets in Bryant Park.

This guide includes a schedule of events and information about the festival participants. *Note: Tickets for each event are sold separately.*

Illustrations by John Ritter

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FRIDAY MAY 18, 2001

A series of paired readings by some of The New Yorker's most celebrated fiction writers. There will also be a special Broadway-theatre event. Fiction-reading tickets are $15. Theatre tickets are $85.

Fiction readings will last approximately an hour and a half.

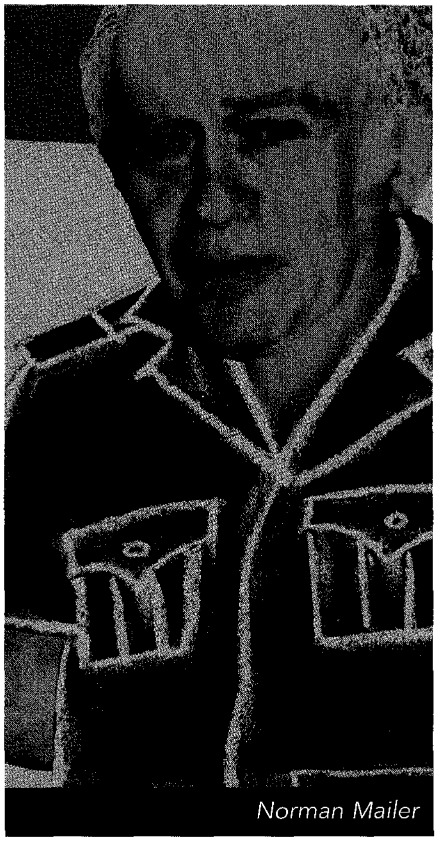
FICTION NIGHT

Martin Amis and Norman Mailer

Martin Amis is the author of fifteen books, among them the novels "Money" and "London Fields" and, most recently, a memoir, "Experience."

Norman Mailer published his first novel, "The Naked and the Dead," in 1948, to international acclaim. Two of his books, including his 1979 novel, "The Executioner's Song," have won Pulitzer Prizes. His most recent novel, "The Gospel According to the Son," is a fictional portrait of Jesus Christ.

7 P.M. Angel Orensanz Foundation
172 Norfolk Street


Norman Mailer

Donald Antrim and T. Coraghessan Boyle

Donald Antrim is the author of three novels, including "The Hundred Brothers" and "The Verificationist."

T. Coraghessan Boyle received the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Fiction in 1999. He has written eight novels, including "The Road to Wellville"; his sixth collection of short stories, "After the Plague," will be published later this year.

7 P.M. Joe's Pub at the Public Theatre
425 Lafayette Street

Ann Beattie and Richard Ford

Ann Beattie published her first short story in *The New Yorker* in 1974. Her most recent book, "Perfect Recall," is a collection of stories. She is the recipient of the 2000 PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Fiction.

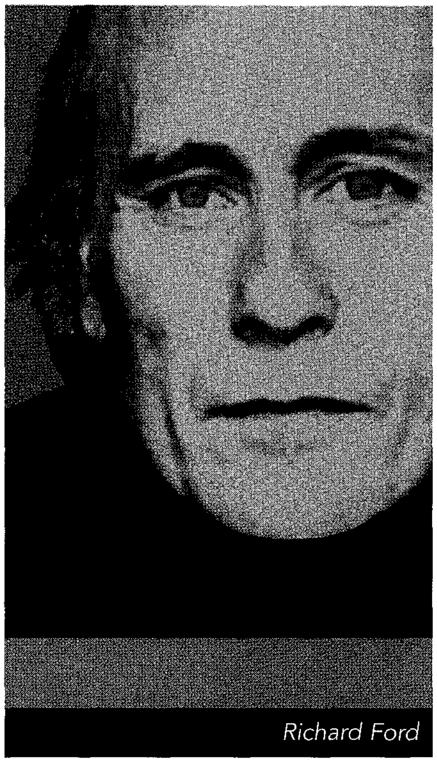
Richard Ford has written five novels, among them "Independence Day," which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1996. He is also the author of two story collections, including "Rock Springs."

9:30 P.M. Angel Orensanz Foundation
172 Norfolk Street

Peter Carey and Annie Proulx

Peter Carey is the author of seven novels and two collections of stories. He won the Booker Prize in 1988 for the novel "Oscar and Lucinda." His most recent novel, published this year, is "True History of the Kelly Gang."

Annie Proulx won both a National Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize in 1994 for "The Shipping News." She is the author of two other novels and two story collections, including "Close Range: Wyoming Stories."


Richard Ford

7 P.M. Altman Building
135 West 18th Street

Michael Cunningham and Deborah Eisenberg

Michael Cunningham is the author of three novels, including "A Home at the End of the World." He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1999 for "The Hours."

Deborah Eisenberg has published three story collections; the most recent one is "All Around Atlantis."

7 P.M. No Moore
234 West Broadway

Edwidge Danticat and Tim O'Brien

Edwidge Danticat has published two novels, including "The Farming of Bones," which is based on the 1937

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massacre of Haitians along the border of the Dominican Republic. She is the editor of a collection of essays by Haitian writers entitled "The Butterfly's Way: Voices from the Haitian Dyaspora in the United States," which came out in February.

Tim O'Brien's works include the novel "Going After Cacciato" and a memoir of his experience in Vietnam, "If I Die in a Combat Zone: Box Me Up and Ship Me Home."

7 P.M. Mercury Lounge
217 East Houston Street

Junot Díaz and Nathan Englander

Junot Díaz was born and brought up in the Dominican Republic. His first story collection, "Drown," was published in 1996. "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao" appeared in *The New Yorker's* winter fiction issue.

Nathan Englander is the author of a short-story collection, "For the Relief of Unbearable Urges." He lives in Jerusalem.

9:30 P.M. Knitting Factory
74 Leonard Street

Roddy Doyle and George Saunders

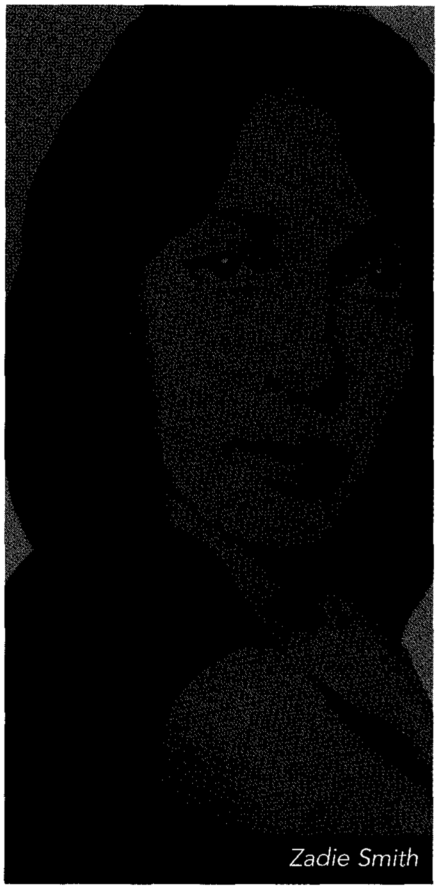
Roddy Doyle is the author of two plays and six novels, including the 1993 Booker Prize winner, "Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha," and, most recently, "A Star Called Henry."

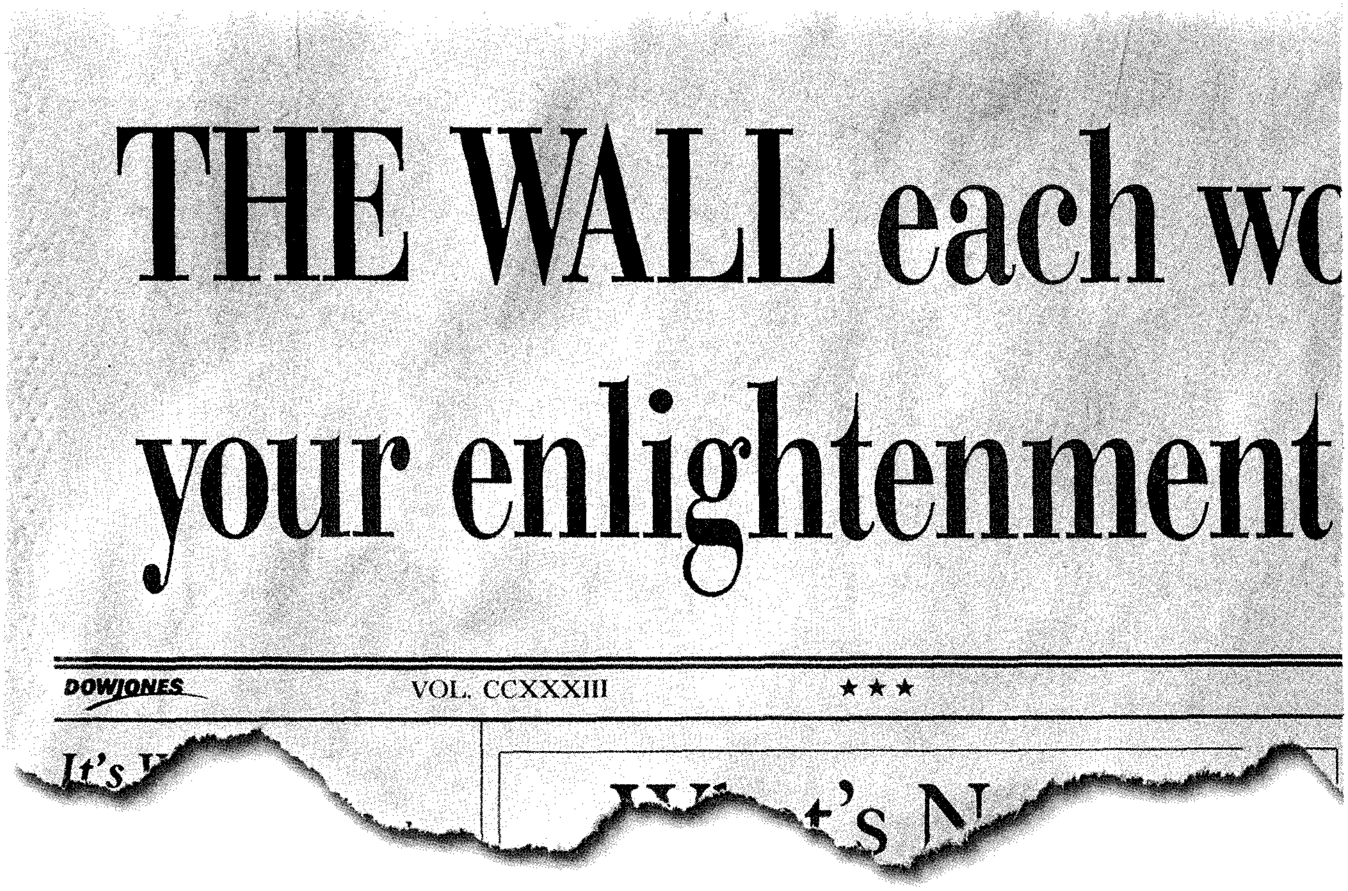
George Saunders's most recent collection of stories, "Pastoralia," and "The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip," a fable illustrated by Lane Smith, were published last year.

7 P.M. Knitting Factory
74 Leonard Street

Jeffrey Eugenides and David Schickler

Jeffrey Eugenides published his first short story in *The New Yorker* in 1996. He is the author of the novel


Zadie Smith



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"The Virgin Suicides."

David Schickler's début *New Yorker* story, "The Smoker," appeared in last year's summer fiction issue. His first collection of stories, "Kissing in Manhattan," will be published this summer.

7 P.M. The Bitter End
147 Bleecker Street

Nick Hornby and Zadie Smith

Nick Hornby has published three books, including "High Fidelity" and "About a Boy." He is the editor of the recent short-story anthology "Speaking with the Angel."

Zadie Smith is the author of "White Teeth," which was nominated for this year's National Book Critics Circle Award.

9:30 P.M. Bowery Ballroom
6 Delancey Street

Matthew Klam and Jonathan Franzen

Matthew Klam published his short story "Sam the Cat" in *The New Yorker* in 1993. His first collection, "Sam the Cat and Other Stories," was published last year.

Jonathan Franzen began contributing to *The New Yorker* in 1994. He is the author of the novels "The Twenty-Seventh City" and "Strong Motion." His third novel, "The Corrections," will be published in the fall.

7 P.M. Fez, under Time Café
380 Lafayette Street

Jhumpa Lahiri

(A second reader will be announced. Visit www.newyorker.com or call 1-877-847-TNYF for program updates.)

Jhumpa Lahiri's first collection of short stories, "Interpreter of Maladies," about the immigrant Indian experience in America, won a Pulitzer Prize last year.

7 P.M. Bowery Ballroom
6 Delancey Street

Rick Moody and Tobias Wolff

Rick Moody is the author of "The Ice Storm" and two other novels; his two collections of short stories include the recently published "Demonology."

Tobias Wolff's collection of stories,

Jhumpa Lahiri

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FRIDAY MAY 18, 2001

"The Night in Question," was published in 1996. He is also the author of "This Boy's Life: A Memoir."
7 P.M. Shine
285 West Broadway

Lorrie Moore and Julian Barnes

Lorrie Moore has published two novels and three collections of short stories, among them "Like Life." Her most recent collection, "Birds of America, " was published in 1998.

Julian Barnes

Julian Barnes is the author of a collection of stories, a collection of essays, and nine novels, including "Flaubert's Parrot." His most recent novel, "Love, etc.," is a sequel to "Talking It Over," which came out in 1991.
9:30 P.M. Altman Building
135 West 18th Street

Walter Mosley and Marisa Silver

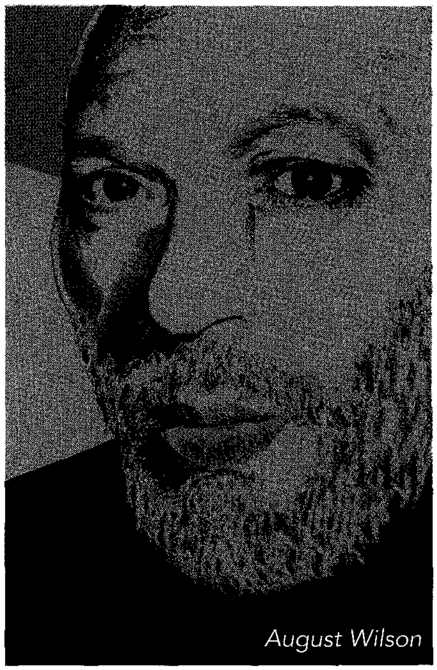
Walter Mosley has written twelve books, including the Easy Rawlins mysteries "Devil in a Blue Dress" and "Gone Fishing." His new novel, "Fearless Jones," will be published this summer.

Marisa Silver made her *New Yorker* début in last summer's fiction issue. Her first collection of short stories, "Babe in Paradise," will be published this summer. She has also directed four feature films.
9:30 P.M. The Bitter End
147 Bleecker Street

ALSO FRIDAY NIGHT

THE BROADWAY SHOW AND TELL

John Lahr, *The New Yorker's* senior drama critic, hosts a pre-performance conversation and cocktail party with **August Wilson**, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of the plays "The Piano Lesson" and "Fences." It will be followed by a performance of Wilson's new play, "King Hedley II."
The party will be held at Gallagher's, in the Trophy Room, 228 West 52nd Street, beginning at 6:30 P.M. The performance will take place at 8 P.M., at the Virginia Theatre, 245 West 52nd Street.


August Wilson

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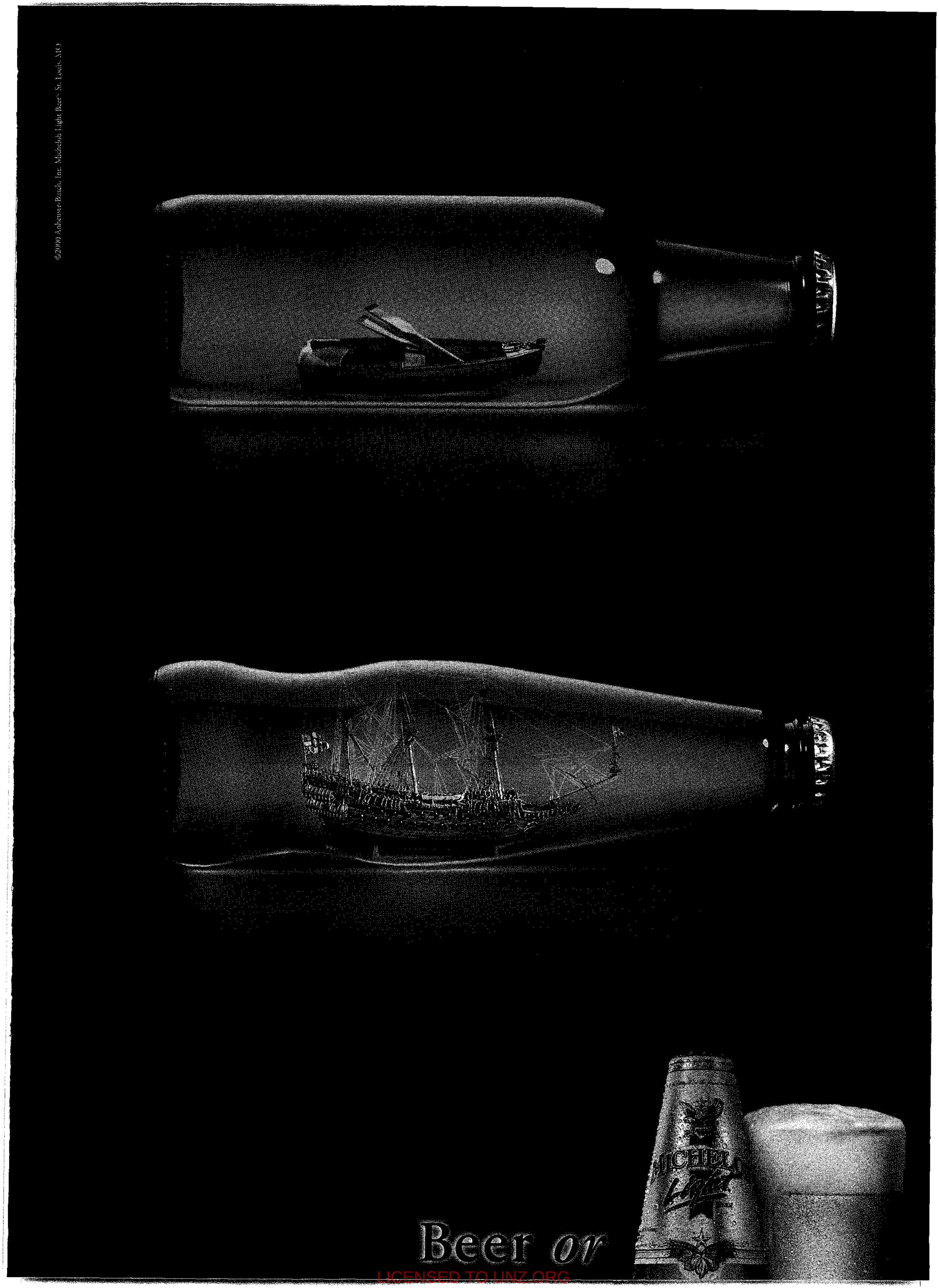
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SATURDAY MAY 19, 2001

A day of talks and interviews by New Yorker writers on topics that interest them and with men and women they've written about. There will also be two evening events: the High Fidelity Dance Party and a salute to the work of Bob Dylan to benefit PEN. Tickets for all daytime events are $15 and are available through Tele-charge. Tickets for the dance party are $20 and are also available through Tele-charge. Tickets for the Bob Dylan salute are $25 and $35 and are available ONLY through Ticketmaster and the Town Hall box office.

Daytime events will last between sixty and ninety minutes.

WRITERS AND THEIR SUBJECTS

John Lahr on Tennessee Williams

(With a special appearance by **Elizabeth Ashley**)

The Tennessee Waltz.

John Lahr has been the senior drama critic for *The New Yorker* since 1992. He is the author of several biographies and of a recent collection of Profiles, "Show and Tell." He will discuss the legacy of Tennessee Williams, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Southern playwright and author.

Elizabeth Ashley is an actress whose breakthrough performance came in 1961, in "Take Her, She's Mine," for which she won a Tony Award. She was also nominated for a Tony in 1974, for her portrayal of Maggie, in a revival of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof."

11 A.M. Yale Club
50 Vanderbilt Avenue

Michael Specter and Peter Singer

The dangerous philosopher.

Michael Specter has been a staff writer and *New Yorker* correspondent since 1998. His Profile of Peter Singer appeared in 1999.

Peter Singer is a professor of bioethics at Princeton and an influential and controversial utilitarian philosopher.

11 A.M. The Morgan Library
29 East 36th Street

David Denby and Norman Mailer

The indestructible subject.

David Denby is a staff writer and film critic for *The New Yorker*. In 1998, he wrote "The Contender," an article about the importance of Norman Mailer. He is the author of "Great Books: My Adventures with Homer, Rousseau, Woolf, and Other Indestructible Writers of the Western World."

Norman Mailer is the author of, among numerous other works, "Tough Guys Don't Dance."

11 A.M. Celeste Bartos Forum, The New York Public Library
42nd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues

Simon Schama on Channelling History

The revolution will be televised.

Simon Schama has been an art critic for *The New Yorker* since 1995. He is the author of several books of European history, including "Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution" and "A History of Britain: At the Edge of the World? 3000 B.C.-1603 A.D." He is also a writer and narrator of historical documentaries for BBC television.

12 noon. Princeton Club
15 West 43rd Street

John Lahr and Anna Deavere Smith

Talk to me; I'm listening.

John Lahr wrote about Anna Deavere Smith for *The New Yorker* in 1993.

Anna Deavere Smith is an actress and a playwright. Several of her solo-performance scripts have been published, including an oral history of the Los Angeles race riots, "Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992," which was recently filmed for PBS. She is also the author of a memoir, "Talk to Me," published last year.

2 P.M. Friars Club
57 East 55th Street

Malcolm Gladwell on The Tipping Point

How little things can make a big difference.

Malcolm Gladwell joined *The New Yorker* as a staff writer in 1996. He will talk about the major themes of his book, "The Tipping Point," a look at how infectious ideas sustain social epidemics.

3 P.M. Princeton Club
15 West 43rd Street

Anthony Lane on Cinema

Let's Get Out of These Wet Things; or, Why People Talk Funny in the Movies.

Anthony Lane has been a film critic for *The New Yorker* since 1993. He has also written about literature and photography; his pieces include essays on Vladimir Nabokov and Walker Evans.

4:30 P.M. Harvard Club
27 West 44th Street

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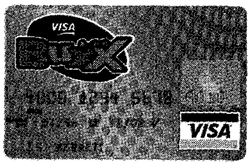

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SATURDAY MAY 19, 2001

THE NEW YORKER "IN CONVERSATION WITH"

Richard Meier interviewed by Paul Goldberger

Richard Meier is an architect whose bold, elegant style is reflected in his designs for the Getty Center in Los Angeles and, most recently, in the new courthouse in Central Islip, New York. A pair of residential towers he designed is currently under construction in Greenwich Village.

Paul Goldberger, who writes on architecture and other cultural subjects, joined *The New Yorker* as architecture critic in 1997.

11 A.M. Harvard Club
27 West 44th Street

Christopher Guest interviewed by Susan Orlean

Christopher Guest is an actor and a co-writer of the screenplays for the films "This Is Spinal Tap" and "Waiting for Guffman," which he also directed. His most recent film is last year's pseudo-documentary about kennel-club competitions, "Best in Show."

Susan Orlean is a *New Yorker* staff writer. Her fourth book, "The Bullfighter Checks Her Makeup: My Encounters with Extraordinary People," was published in January.

11 A.M. Friars Club
57 East 55th Street

Tom Freston interviewed by James Surowiecki

Tom Freston was a founder of MTV. He is now the chairman and C.E.O. of MTV Networks. He oversees the management of seven programming networks, including MTV, VH1, and Nickelodeon.

James Surowiecki writes *The New Yorker's* weekly business column, The Financial Page.

1 P.M. Yale Club
50 Vanderbilt Avenue

Bill Bryson interviewed by Bill Buford

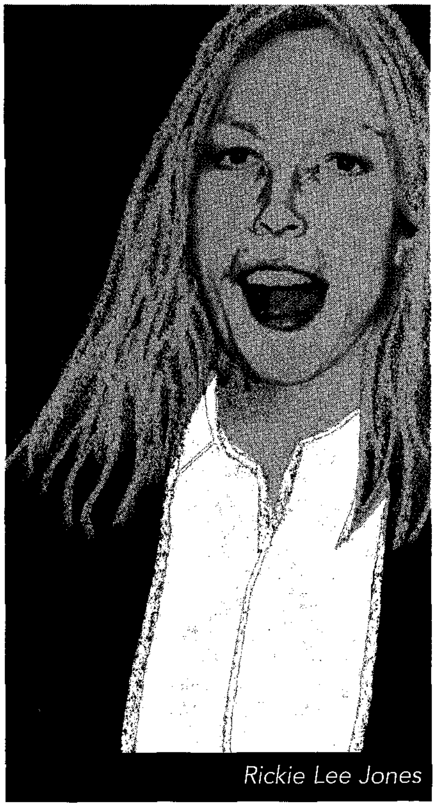
Bill Bryson has written several popular humorous travel books, including "In a Sunburned Country" and "A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail."

Bill Buford has been the fiction and literary editor of *The New Yorker* since 1995.

1 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre
110 West 57th Street

Rickie Lee Jones interviewed by Hilton Als

Rickie Lee Jones is a singer and songwriter who has performed her blend of smoky, finger-popping music for more than two decades. Her most recent album is entitled "It's Like This."


Rickie Lee Jones

Hilton Als joined *The New Yorker* as a staff writer in 1994. His pieces for the magazine include a Profile of Richard Pryor and an essay on Flannery O'Connor. His most recent book is "The Women."

2 P.M. Float
240 West 52nd Street

M. Night Shyamalan interviewed by David Denby

M. Night Shyamalan has written and directed several films, including "The Sixth Sense" and "Unbreakable." He also co-wrote the screenplay for the film "Stuart Little."

David Denby is a film critic for *The New Yorker.*

2 P.M. The Morgan Library
29 East 36th Street

Woody Allen interviewed by David Remnick

Woody Allen has directed thirty-two movies, acted in thirty-three, and written or co-written thirty-five screenplays. His new film, "The Curse of the Jade Scorpion," will open later this year. His first Casual, "The Gossage-Vardebedian Papers," was published in *The New Yorker* in 1966. Since then, he has contributed more than two dozen stories.

David Remnick is the editor of *The New Yorker.*

3 P.M. Celeste Bartos Forum, The New York Public Library
42nd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues

Chuck Close interviewed by Adam Gopnik

Chuck Close is a painter and photographer who came to prominence in the early seventies. His monumental portraits, made from enlarged photographs, were celebrated in a 1998 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art.

Adam Gopnik has been writing about art and culture for *The New Yorker* since 1986. In 1995, he began writing the Paris Journal, about culture and daily life in France; his dispatches were recently collected in a book, "Paris to the Moon."

4 P.M. Auditorium, Equitable Center
787 Seventh Avenue

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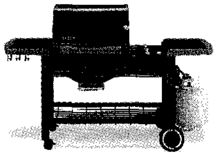

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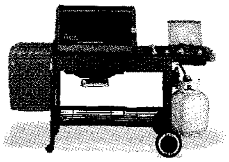

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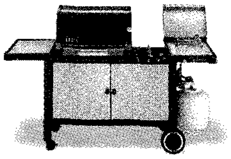

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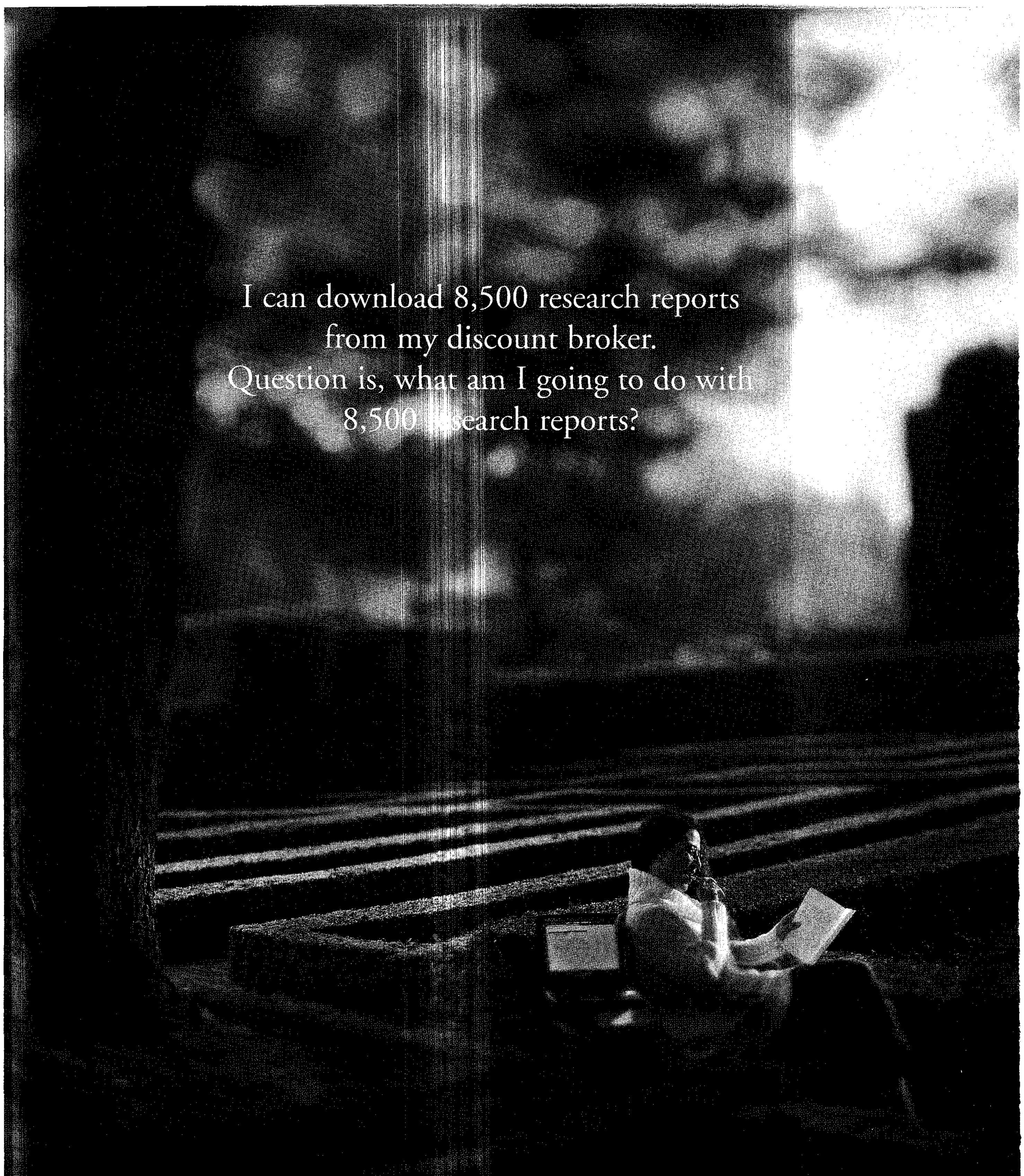
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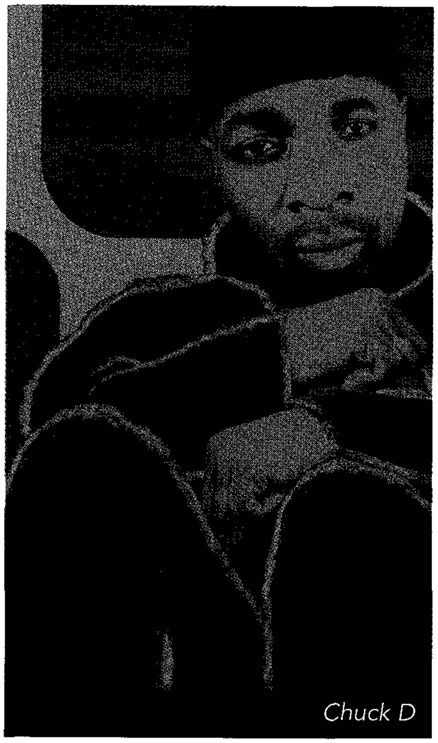
Chuck D interviewed by Ben Greenman

Chuck D was the eloquent lead vocalist of Public Enemy, the pioneering hardcore rap group that in 1988 came out with the influential hip-hop album "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back." Recently, he released a solo album, "Autobiography of Mistachuck."



Chuck D

Ben Greenman is an editor at *The New Yorker*. A collection of his pieces, "Superbad," will be published this summer.

4:30 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre
110 West 57th Street

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Enter Laughing

On writing funny.

Susan Morrison, *New Yorker* articles editor, moderator. With **Andy Borowitz**, **Patricia Marx**, **Paul Rudnick**, and **Wendy Wasserstein**.

Andy Borowitz is the author of the book "The Trillionaire Next Door" and is a contributor to *The New Yorker's* Shouts & Murmurs column.

Patricia Marx was the first woman on the staff of the Harvard *Lampoon*. In 1983, she published "How to Regain Your Virginity." She has also written for "Saturday Night Live" and for the children's television show "Rugrats."

Paul Rudnick is a playwright and screenwriter. His work in film includes "Jeffrey" and "Addams Family Values." He frequently contributes humor pieces to *The New Yorker*.

Wendy Wasserstein is a writer and playwright whose play "The Heidi Chronicles" was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1989. Her most recent play is "Old Money." Her last piece for *The New Yorker* was "Complications."

11 A.M. Float
240 West 52nd Street

Hot Spots

Far-flung reporters in times of trouble.

Christopher Hitchens, essayist and political journalist, moderator. With **Christiane Amanpour**, **Jon Lee Anderson**, **Philip Gourevitch**, **Isabel Hilton**, and **Michael Ignatieff**.

Christiane Amanpour is CNN's chief international correspondent. She has won George Polk Awards for her coverage of the conflicts in Bosnia and Afghanistan, along with other journalism awards.

Jon Lee Anderson is a *New Yorker* staff writer who has written about Panama, Cuba, and Angola. He is the author of "Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life."

Philip Gourevitch is the author of "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda."

Isabel Hilton is the author of a book on Tibetan religious history, "The Search for the Panchen Lama."

Michael Ignatieff is the Carr Visiting Professor of Human Rights Practice at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and the author of "Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond."

12 noon. First Amendment Center
580 Madison Avenue

Christiane Amanpour

The Next Epidemic

Nightmares in medicine.

Robert Bazell, NBC News chief health and science correspondent, moderator. With **Anthony S. Fauci, M.D.**; **Laurie Garrett**; **Jerome Groopman, M.D.**; and **Richard Rhodes**.

Anthony S. Fauci is one of America's leading AIDS researchers. He has frequently been cited for his contributions in the areas of immunology and infectious diseases.

Laurie Garrett is a Pulitzer Prize-winning science and health writer. She is the author of "The Coming Plague" and "Betrayal of Trust."

Jerome Groopman is a professor

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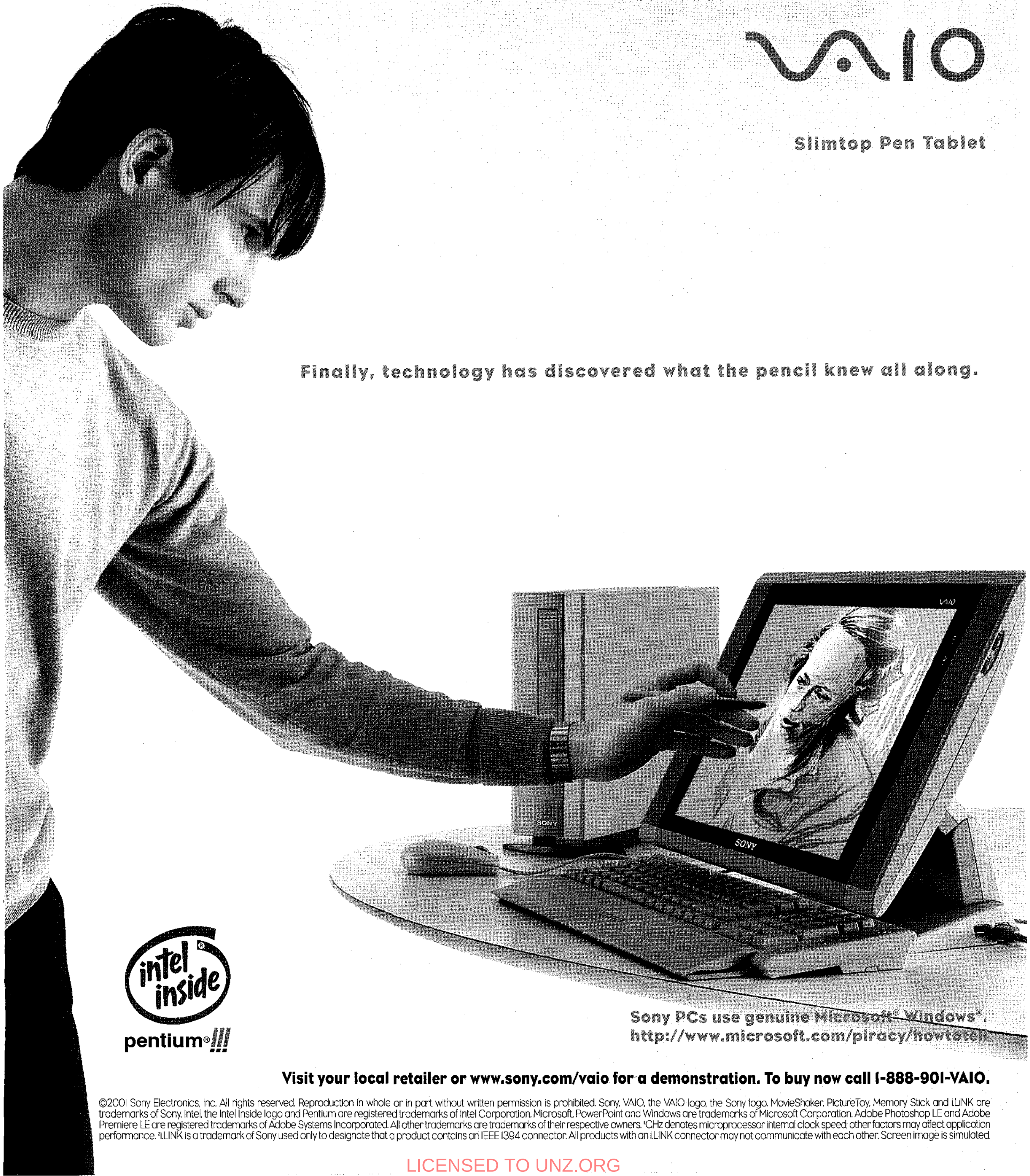

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of medicine at Harvard and the author of "Second Opinions." He writes about medicine and biology for *The New Yorker.*

Richard Rhodes is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author of nineteen books, including "Deadly Feasts: The 'Prion' Controversy and the Public's Health," a look at mad-cow disease and its human counterparts.

12:30 P.M. Princeton Club
15 West 43rd Street

Literary Lawyers

The letter of the law.

Jeffrey Toobin, *New Yorker* staff writer, moderator. With **Louis Begley**, **Richard Posner**, and **Scott Turow**.

Louis Begley is the author of "Wartime Lies" and "About Schmidt." His latest novel is "Schmidt Delivered." He is a partner at Debevoise & Plimpton.

Richard Posner was the chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit from 1993 to 2000. He is an editor of *The American Law and Economics Review* and has written more than thirty books, including "An Affair of State: The Investigation, Impeachment, and Trial of President Clinton."

Scott Turow, an honors graduate of Harvard Law School, is the author of several courtroom thrillers, including "Presumed Innocent" and "The Burden of Proof."

1:30 P.M. Harvard Club
27 West 44th Street

Crime Pays

Liars, guns, and money.

Mark Singer, *New Yorker* staff writer, moderator. With **Philip Gourevitch**, **Elmore Leonard**, **Walter Mosley**, and **Susan Orlean**.

Philip Gourevitch is a *New Yorker* staff writer and the author of the forthcoming "A Cold Case," based on his Annals of Crime article last year about a double murder in New York in 1970.

Elmore Leonard is the author of many crime novels, including "Get Shorty" and its sequel, "Be Cool."

Walter Mosley is a novelist and the creator of the Los Angeles detective Easy Rawlins.

Susan Orlean, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, is the author of four books, including "The Orchid Thief."

3 P.M. Princeton Club
15 West 43rd Street

The Début Writers' Roundtable

What's next?

Deborah Treisman, *New Yorker* deputy fiction editor, moderator. With **Nathan Englander**, **Z. Z. Packer**, **Lucinda Rosenfeld**, and **David Schickler**.

Nathan Englander is the author of the short-story collection "For the Relief of Unbearable Urges." His début *New Yorker* story, "The Last One Way," was published in 1999.

Z. Z. Packer's first story for *The New Yorker*, "Drinking Coffee Elsewhere," was published in last summer's fiction issue. She is working on her first collection of short stories.

Lucinda Rosenfeld, the author of the novel "What She Saw...," made her *New Yorker* début last year with the story "The Male Gaze."

David Schickler's first collection of stories will be published this summer. "The Smoker," his début short story for *The New Yorker*, appeared in last summer's fiction issue.

4 P.M. Barnes & Noble
33 East 17th Street

LITERARY TOURS

The New Yorker's theatre and television critic, **Nancy Franklin**, and editor **Alice Truax**, in association with Big Onion Walking Tours, will each

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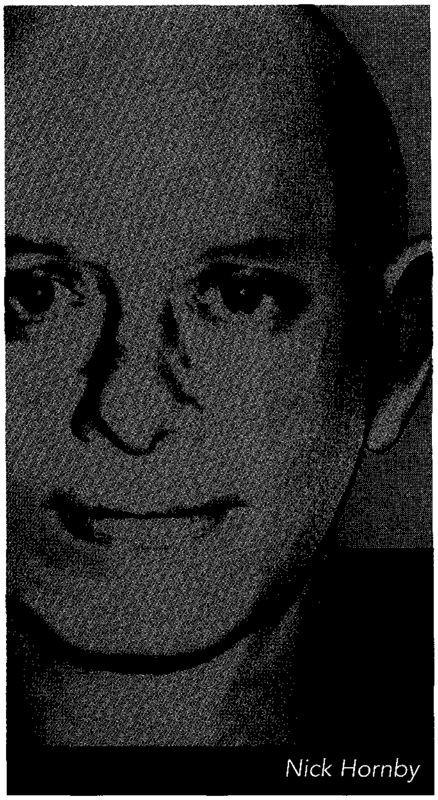
lead a walking tour of midtown Manhattan and discuss the many literary and *New Yorker*-related landmarks of the area. Each tour will take approximately an hour and a half. The morning tour, hosted by Alice Truax, will begin at 11 A.M. The afternoon tour, hosted by Nancy Franklin, will begin at 3 P.M.

Each tour's starting point will be noted on tickets.



Nick Hornby

SATURDAY NIGHT

THE HIGH FIDELITY DANCE PARTY

Nick Hornby, the author of "Fever Pitch" and "High Fidelity," will d.j. *The New Yorker's* first dance soirée. A pop-music critic for *The New Yorker*, he promises his revellers a musical feast of past and present hits, along with some idiosyncratic favorites.
10:30 P.M. Shine
285 West Broadway.

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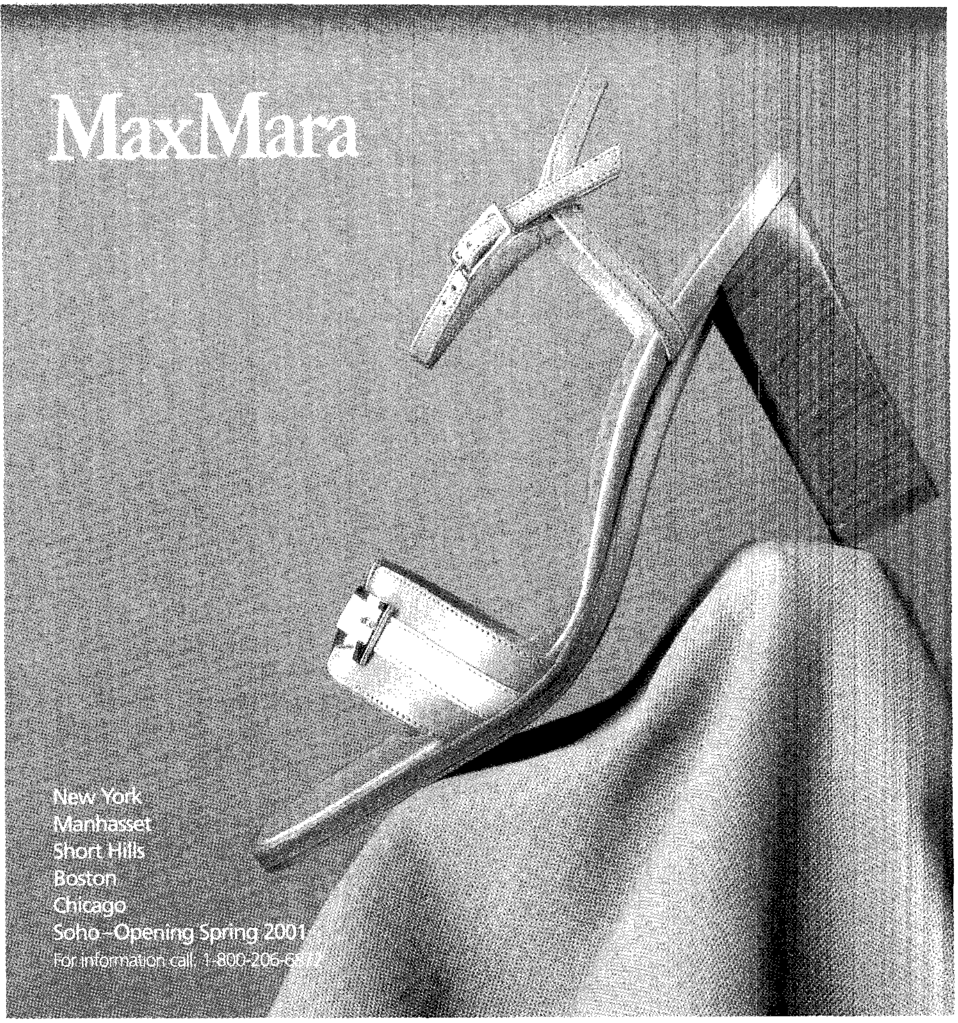

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The Work of Bob Dylan: A Benefit for PEN

David Remnick, editor of *The New Yorker*, moderator. **Gregory Mosher**, director. With **Tracy Chapman**, **The Esquires**, **Bobbie Ann Mason**, **Rick Moody**, **Graham Parker**, **Christopher Ricks**, **Sam Shepard**, **Patti Smith**, **Anne Waldman**, and others to be announced.

Tracy Chapman is a singer and songwriter of soulful folk-rock. Her latest album is "Telling Stories."

The Esquires are a performing group that includes the vocalist Gillian Welch and her partners the guitarist David Rawlings and the drummer David Steele.

Bobbie Ann Mason is a novelist and short-story writer. Her latest book, "Clear Springs," is a memoir.

Rick Moody has just published a new collection of short stories, "Demonology."

Graham Parker released the first of his many albums, "Howlin' Wind," in 1976. Last summer, he made his literary début with a collection of stories, "Carp Fishing on Valium."

Christopher Ricks, a professor at Boston University, has written books about Milton, Tennyson, Keats, and T. S. Eliot.

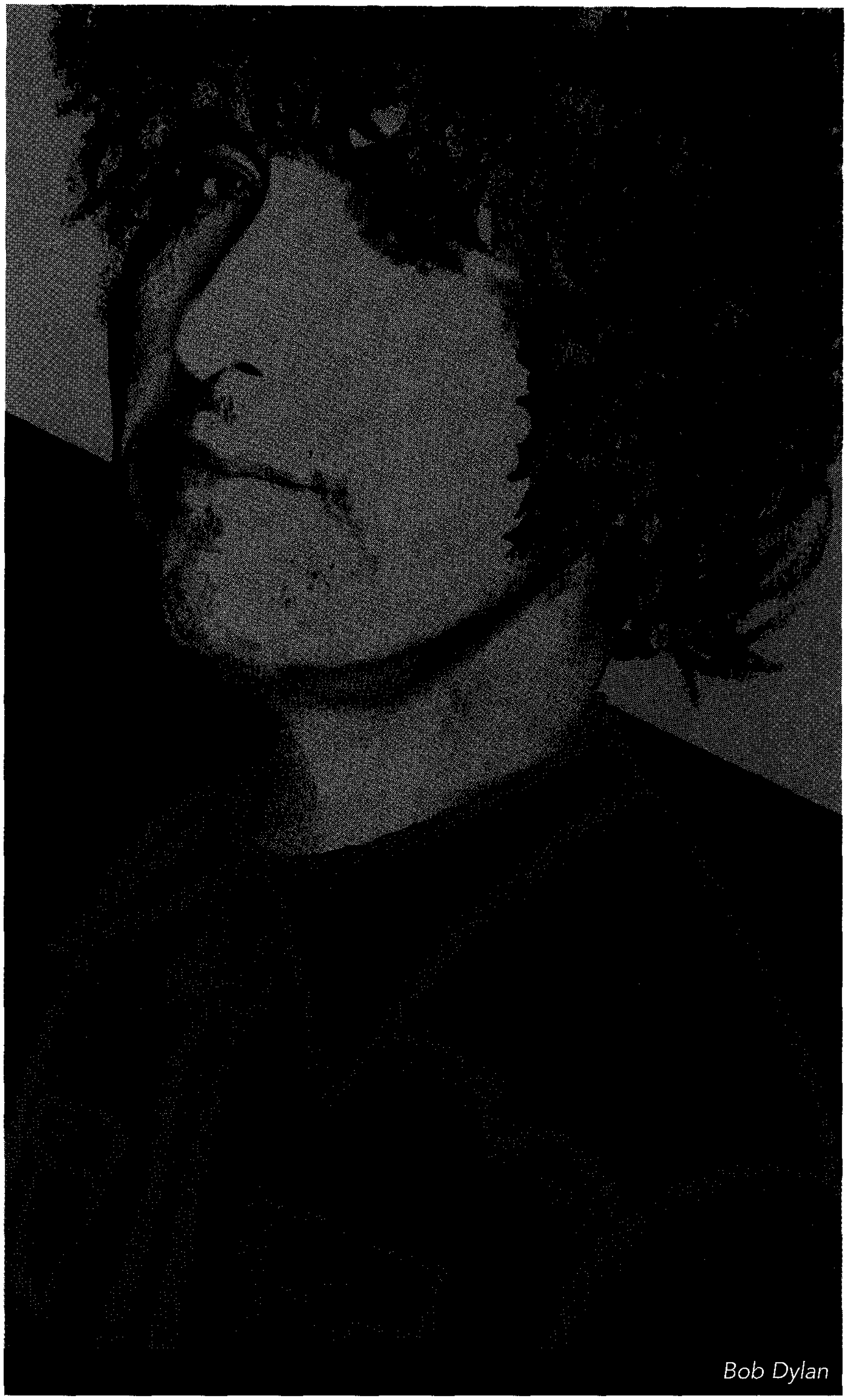
Sam Shepard is an actor, a screenwriter, and the author of numerous plays, including "Buried Child," which won a Pulitzer Prize. He has also published several collections of short stories.

Patti Smith is the high priestess of rock-and-roll poetry. Her eighth album, "Gung Ho," released last year, was dedicated to her father.

Anne Waldman is the author of more than a dozen volumes of poetry. She was featured in the 1978 Dylan-tour film, "Renaldo and Clara."

Gregory Mosher is a theatre director who has won two Tony Awards. He recently directed his first film, "The Prime Gig."

PEN is an international fellowship of writers, poets, editors, and playwrights. Among its activities, programs, and services are human-rights campaigns on behalf of writers censored or imprisoned because of their work, outreach projects to encourage literacy, and financial assistance to writers in need.



Bob Dylan

8 P.M. The Town Hall
123 West 43rd Street
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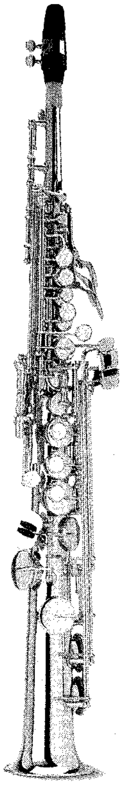

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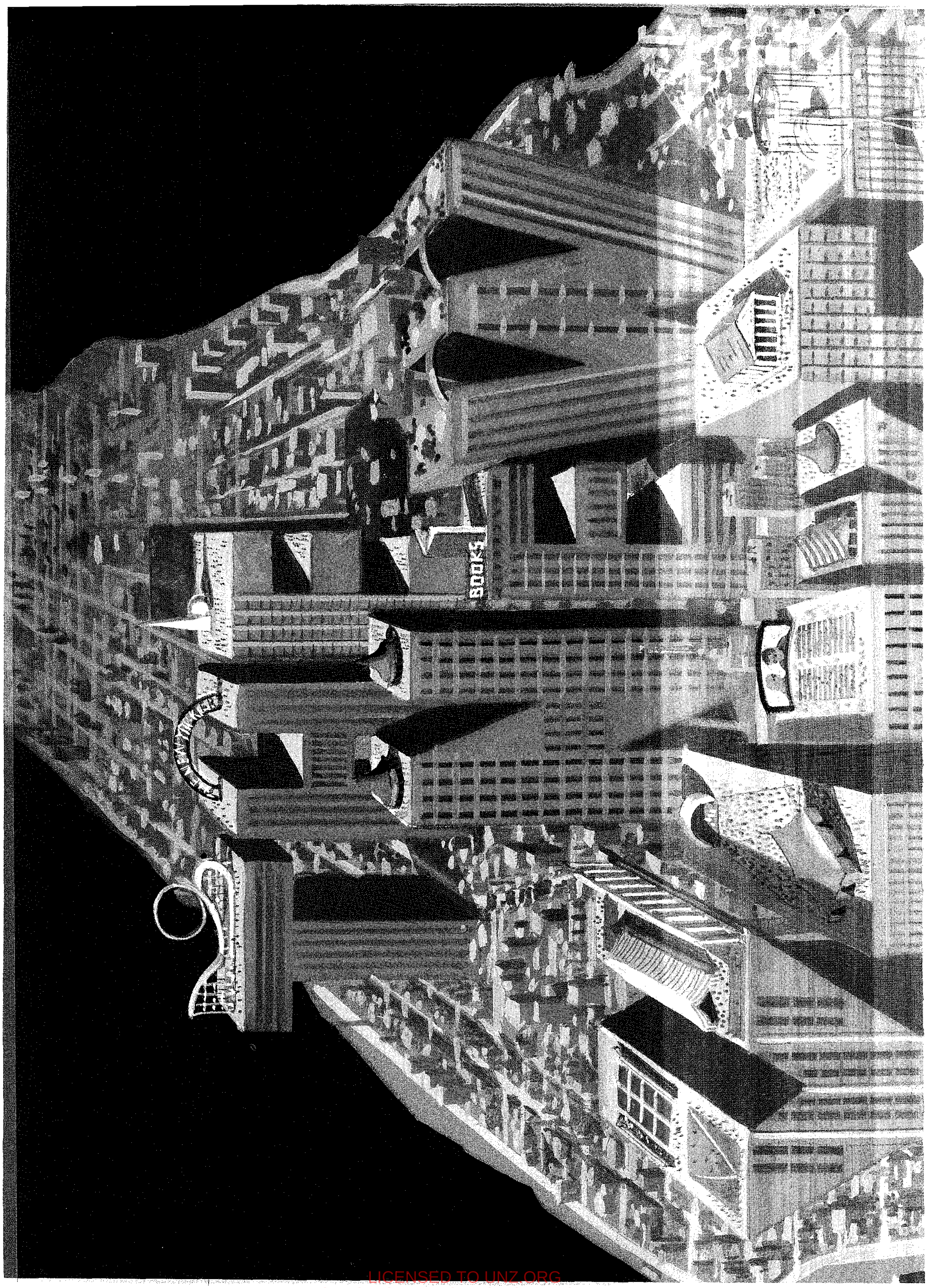
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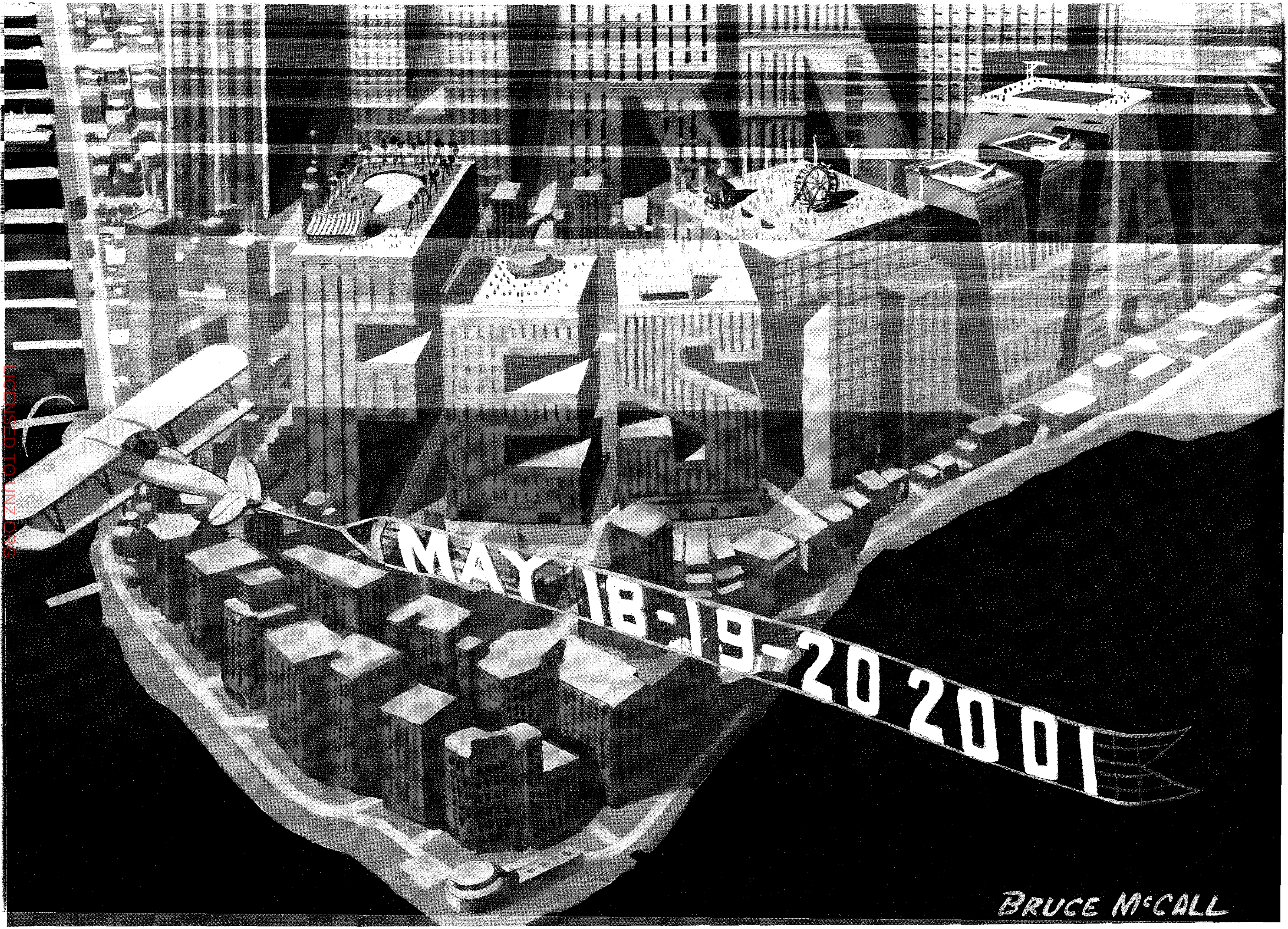
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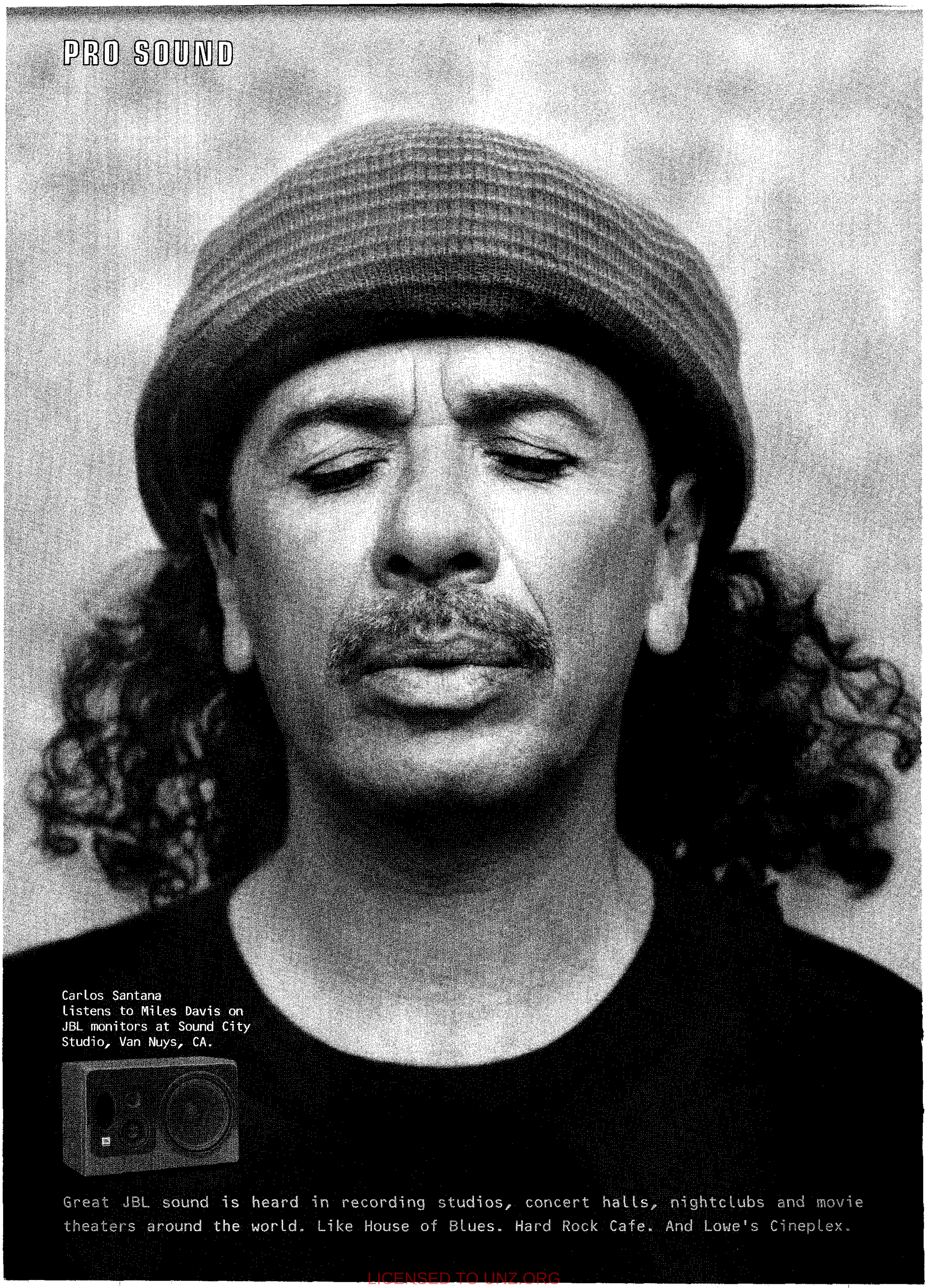

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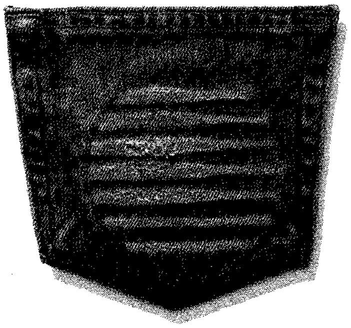

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SUNDAY MAY 20, 2001

Sunday's program will include brunches with New Yorker editors, writers, cartoonists, and cover artists, along with other participants; panel discussions; and a free Poetry in the Park reading. Tickets for brunches are $30. Tickets for all other events (excluding the poetry reading) are $15.

Events will last between sixty and ninety minutes.

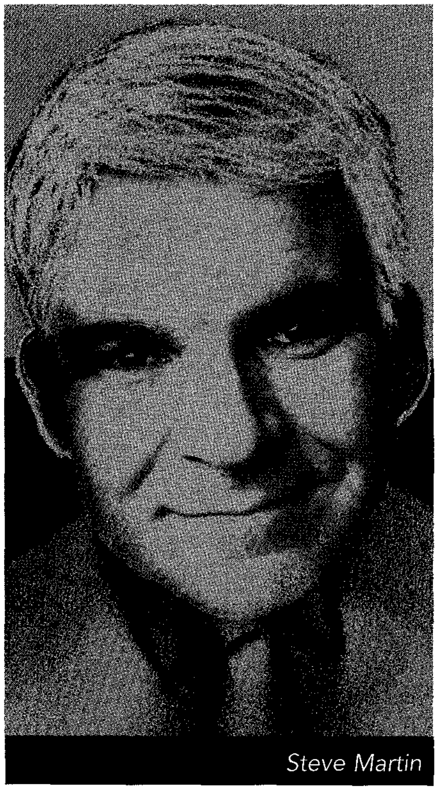
THE NEW YORKER "IN CONVERSATION WITH"

Steve Martin interviewed by Adam Gopnik

Steve Martin is an actor and a screenwriter and playwright. His latest book is the novella "Shopgirl." He frequently contributes humor pieces to *The New Yorker.*

Adam Gopnik, a staff writer, reports on art and culture for *The New Yorker.*

1 P.M. Celeste Bartos Forum, The New York Public Library
42nd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues



Steve Martin

Ang Lee interviewed by David Denby

Ang Lee is a Taiwanese director whose films include last year's martial-arts romance "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." He attended N.Y.U., where he worked on Spike Lee's student film "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads."

David Denby is a film critic for *The New Yorker.*

3 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre
110 West 57th Street

WRITERS AND THEIR SUBJECTS

Calvin Trillin and The Tummy Trilogy Revisited

A digestive course.

Calvin Trillin has published more than three hundred pieces in *The New Yorker* since he began contributing, in 1963. At this event, he will discuss his thoughts about eating in America, which are reflected in the antic pieces he began as a respite from his more serious U.S. Journals. The articles eventually led to three books: "American Fried," "Alice, Let's Eat," and "Third Helpings."

4 P.M. Princeton Club
15 West 43rd Street

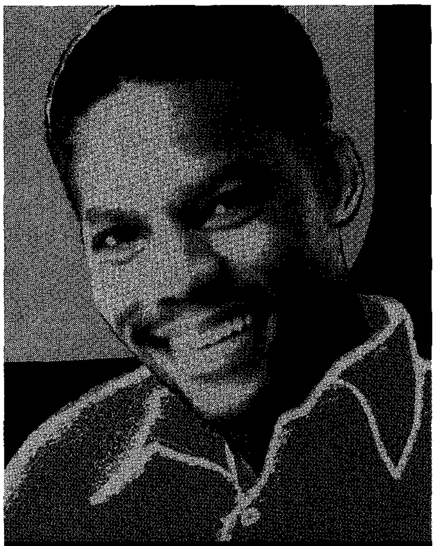
PANEL DISCUSSIONS

The State of Humor in America

A standup bunch.

Nancy Franklin, *New Yorker* theatre and television critic, moderator. With **D. L. Hughley**, **Robert Klein**, and **Cheri Oteri**.

D. L. Hughley is a comedian and the star of the television series "The Hughleys." His standup performance was featured in Spike Lee's "The Original Kings of Comedy."



D. L. Hughley

Robert Klein is well known for his biting commentary, on everything from politics and the news to sports and commercials, and has inspired an entire generation of new comedians.

Cheri Oteri is developing a sitcom for CBS. A former cast member of "Saturday Night Live," her best-known characters were the Spartan Spirit cheerleader Arianna and the overmedicated Colette Reardon.

11 A.M. Float
240 West 52nd Street

Private Lives

The public story.

Bill Buford, *New Yorker* fiction and literary editor, moderator. With **Martin**

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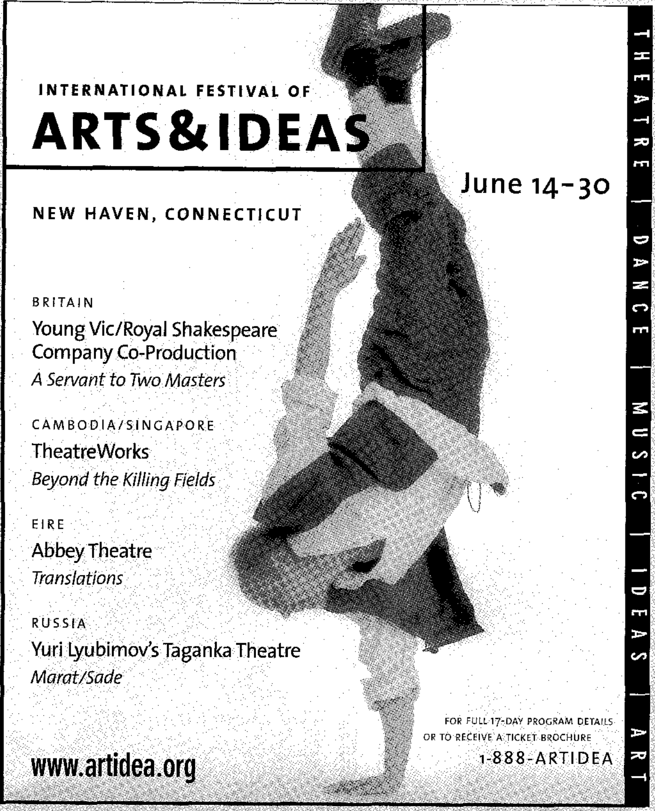

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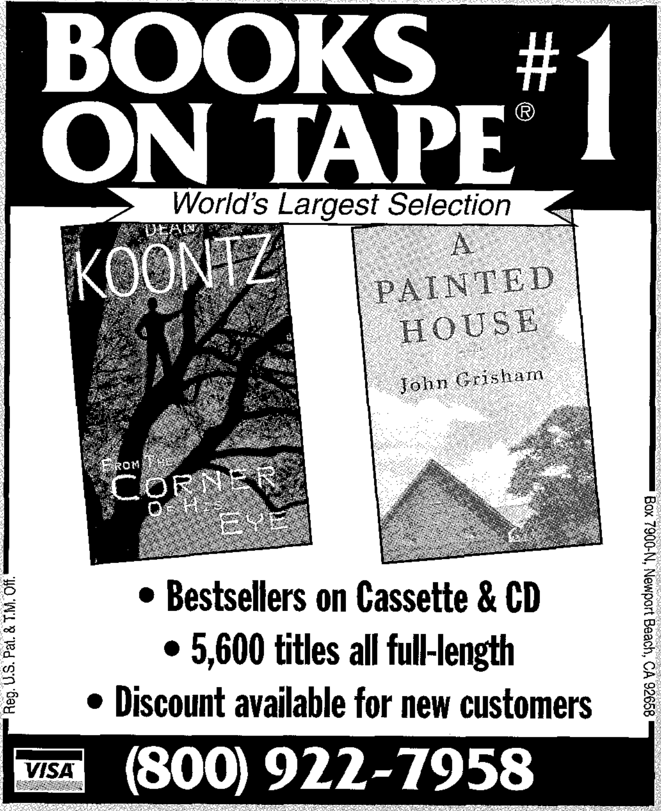

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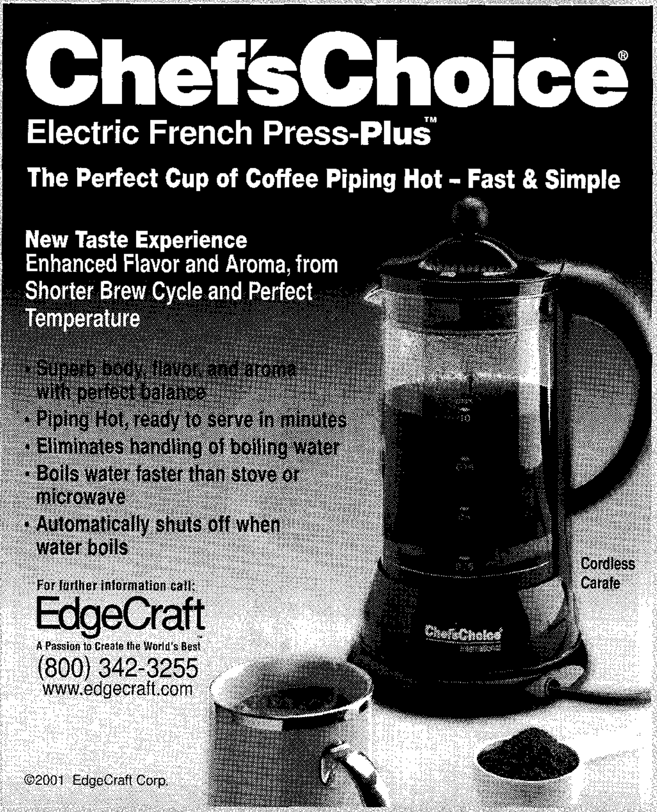

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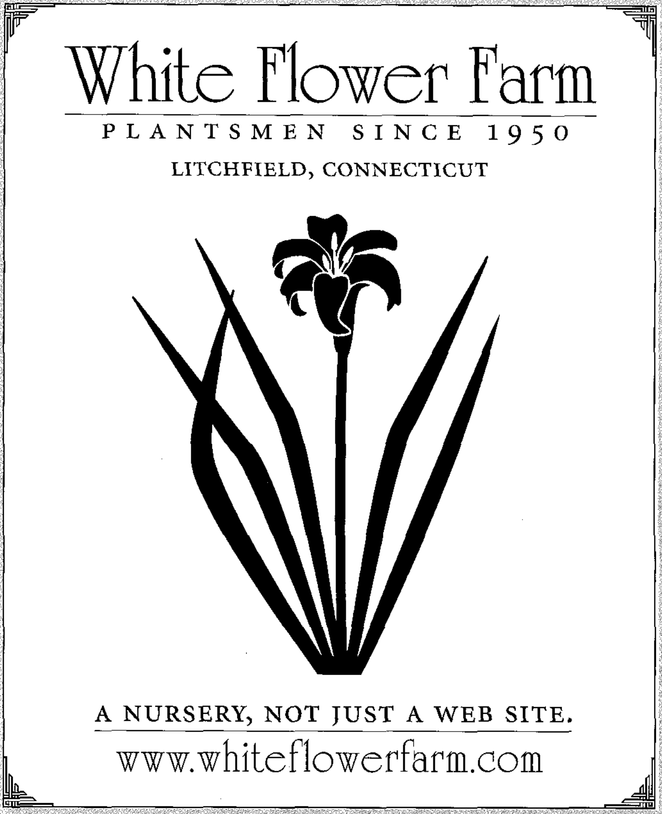

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SUNDAY MAY 20, 2001

Amis, **Dave Eggers**, **Mary Karr**, and **Frank McCourt**.

Martin Amis is the author of the memoir "Experience."

Dave Eggers is the editor of *McSweeney's* and the author of the book "A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius."

Mary Karr is the author of two books about her Texas childhood, "The Liars' Club" and its sequel, "Cherry."

Frank McCourt's memoir "Angela's Ashes" won a Pulitzer Prize in 1997. "'Tis," a sequel, was published in 1999.

11 A.M. Princeton Club
15 West 43rd Street

The Genesis of Fashion

Changing clothes.

Judith Thurman, *New Yorker* contributor, moderator. With **Anne Hollander**, **Stella McCartney**, **Alexander McQueen**, and **Andrée Putnam**.

Anne Hollander has written several books on art and dress, including "Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress."

Stella McCartney is the chief fashion designer at the French fashion house Chloé. Last year, she won the VH1/*Vogue* award for designer of the year.

Alexander McQueen has three times received the British designer-of-the-year award. He will launch his own line for Gucci in the fall.

Andrée Putnam's international influence and diversity are reflected in her designs for, among other things, the interior of the Concorde for Air France and Acme's rollerball pen.

2 P.M. Float
240 West 52nd Street

SUNDAY BRUNCH

Cover Artists' Brunch

Best face forward.

Françoise Mouly, art editor, host. With *New Yorker* cover artists **Barry Blitt**, **Anita Kunz**, and **Bruce McCall**.

Barry Blitt is a frequent contributor to *The New Yorker*. He is the illustrator of "More Political Babble: The Dumbest Things Politicians Ever Said," among other works.

Anita Kunz is an illustrator whose first *New Yorker* cover appeared in July of 1995.

Bruce McCall published his first drawing in *The New Yorker* in 1983. His illustrated book "The Last Dreamorama" will be published in the fall.

10 A.M. Café SFA, Saks Fifth Avenue
611 Fifth Avenue at 50th Street, 8th Floor

Kitchen Confidential Brunch

What you don't want to know.

Anthony Bourdain, host. Anthony Bourdain presides as executive chef over the kitchen of Les Halles restaurant and is the author of "Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly."

11 A.M. Les Halles
411 Park Avenue South

Tabloid Journalism Brunch

Today's top story.

Pete Hamill, *Daily News* columnist, host. With **Jim Dwyer**, **Clyde Haberman**, **Mike Lupica**, and **Jeannie Williams**.

Jim Dwyer is a Pulitzer Prize-winning former *Daily News* columnist. He recently joined the New York *Times*.

Clyde Haberman is a columnist for the New York *Times*.

Mike Lupica is a syndicated sports columnist for the *Daily News*.

Jeannie Williams is the News & views columnist for *USA Today*.

11 A.M. Pershing Square Café
90 East 42nd Street

Cartoon Brunch

Good eggs, all.

Robert Mankoff, *New Yorker* cartoon editor, host. With **George Booth**, **Roz Chast**, **Liza Donnelly**, **Alex Gregory**, and **Jack Ziegler**.

George Booth has been contributing to *The New Yorker* since 1969. His drawings have been collected most recently in "The Essential George Booth."

Roz Chast joined the magazine in 1978 and has contributed more than seven hundred drawings. She is the illustrator of many books, including the cookbook "One Bite Won't Kill You."

Liza Donnelly's first drawing in *The New Yorker* appeared in 1982. She has published a series of children's books about a dinosaur-loving boy and his dog; the most recent is "Dinosaur Valentine."

Alex Gregory began contributing to the magazine in 1999. He is a writer for the animated television series "King of the Hill."

Jack Ziegler began contributing drawings to *The New Yorker* in 1974. A collection, "The Essential Jack Ziegler," was published in December.

1 P.M. Algonquin Hotel
59 West 44th Street

POETRY IN THE PARK

An open-air reading

The New Yorker presents emerging and renowned poets at a free public reading in Bryant Park. The event will be introduced by *The New Yorker's* poetry editor, Alice Quinn. Readers will include **April Bernard**, **Jorie Graham**, **Donald Hall**, **Major Jackson**, **Paul Muldoon**, **Mary Oliver**, **Kay Ryan**, **C. K. Williams**, **David Woo, and Franz Wright**.

4 P.M. Bryant Park. 42nd Street and Sixth Avenue. In case of rain, the reading will take place at the Celeste Bartos Forum, The New York Public Library, 42nd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Free tickets will be distributed, on a first-come, first-served basis, at the Festival Café (14-20 West 40th Street), beginning at 3 P.M.

THE NEW YORKER FESTIVAL TICKETS ARE NOW AVAILABLE

FRIDAY, MAY 18

Tickets for readings are $15. The Broadway Show and Tell tickets are $85.

FICTION NIGHT

Martin Amis and Norman Mailer
7 P.M. Angel Orensanz Foundation
Donald Antrim and T. Coraghessan Boyle
7 P.M. Joe's Pub at the Public Theatre
Ann Beattie and Richard Ford
9:30 P.M. Angel Orensanz Foundation
Peter Carey and Annie Proulx
7 P.M. Altman Building
Michael Cunningham and Deborah Eisenberg
7 P.M. No Moore
Edwidge Danticat and Tim O'Brien
7 P.M. Mercury Lounge
Junot Díaz and Nathan Englander
9:30 P.M. Knitting Factory
Roddy Doyle and George Saunders
7 P.M. Knitting Factory
Jeffrey Eugenides and David Schickler
7 P.M. The Bitter End
Nick Hornby and Zadie Smith
9:30 P.M. Bowery Ballroom
Matthew Klam and Jonathan Franzen
7 P.M. Fez, under Time Café
Jhumpa Lahiri and (reader TBA)
7 P.M. Bowery Ballroom
Rick Moody and Tobias Wolff
7 P.M. Shine
Lorrie Moore and Julian Barnes
9:30 P.M. Altman Building
Walter Mosley and Marisa Silver
9:30 P.M. The Bitter End

ALSO

The Broadway Show and Tell
6:30 P.M. Gallagher's, The Trophy Room

SATURDAY, MAY 19

Tickets for all daytime events are $15. Tickets for the High Fidelity Dance Party are $20. Tickets for The Work of Bob Dylan: A Benefit for PEN are $25 and $35.

WRITERS AND THEIR SUBJECTS

John Lahr on Tennessee Williams (with Elizabeth Ashley)
11 A.M. Yale Club
Michael Specter and Peter Singer
11 A.M. The Morgan Library
David Denby and Norman Mailer
11 A.M. Celeste Bartos Forum, The New York Public Library
Simon Schama on Channelling History
12 noon. Princeton Club
John Lahr and Anna Deavere Smith
2 P.M. Friars Club
Malcolm Gladwell on The Tipping Point
3 P.M. Princeton Club
Anthony Lane on Cinema
4:30 P.M. Harvard Club

THE NEW YORKER "IN CONVERSATION WITH"

Richard Meier interviewed by Paul Goldberger
11 A.M. Harvard Club
Christopher Guest interviewed by Susan Orlean
11 A.M. Friars Club
Tom Freston interviewed by James Surowiecki
1 P.M. Yale Club
Bill Bryson interviewed by Bill Buford
1 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre
Rickie Lee Jones interviewed by Hilton Als
2 P.M. Float
M. Night Shyamalan interviewed by David Denby
2 P.M. The Morgan Library
Woody Allen interviewed by David Remnick
3 P.M. Celeste Bartos Forum, The New York Public Library
Chuck Close interviewed by Adam Gopnik
4 P.M. Auditorium, Equitable Center
Chuck D interviewed by Ben Greenman
4:30 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Enter Laughing
11 A.M. Float
Hot Spots
12 noon. First Amendment Center
The Next Epidemic
12:30 P.M. Princeton Club
Literary Lawyers
1:30 P.M. Harvard Club
Crime Pays
3 P.M. Princeton Club
The Début Writers' Roundtable
4 P.M. Barnes & Noble

LITERARY TOURS

With Alice Truax
11 A.M.
With Nancy Franklin
3 P.M.
(Each tour's starting point will be noted on tickets.)

THE HIGH FIDELITY DANCE PARTY

10:30 P.M. Shine

THE WORK OF BOB DYLAN: A BENEFIT FOR PEN

8 P.M. The Town Hall
(Tickets through Ticketmaster and the Town Hall box office ONLY.)

SUNDAY, MAY 20

Tickets for brunches are $30. Tickets for all other events are $15. (The Poetry in the Park reading is free.)

THE NEW YORKER "IN CONVERSATION WITH"

Steve Martin interviewed by Adam Gopnik
1 P.M. Celeste Bartos Forum, The New York Public Library
Ang Lee interviewed by David Denby
3 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre

WRITERS AND THEIR SUBJECTS

Calvin Trillin and The Tummy Trilogy Revisited
4 P.M. Princeton Club

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

The State of Humor in America
11 A.M. Float
Private Lives
11 A.M. Princeton Club
The Genesis of Fashion
2 P.M. Float

SUNDAY BRUNCH

Cover Artists' Brunch
10 A.M. Café SFA, Saks Fifth Avenue
Kitchen Confidential Brunch
11 A.M. Les Halles
Tabloid Journalism Brunch
11 A.M. Pershing Square Café
Cartoon Brunch
1 P.M. Algonquin Hotel

SUNDAY AFTERNOON POETRY IN THE PARK

4 P.M. **Free.** Bryant Park, 42nd Street and Sixth Avenue. In case of rain, the reading will take place at the Celeste Bartos Forum, The New York Public Library, 42nd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Free tickets will be distributed, on a first-come, first-served basis, at the Festival Café (14-20 West 40th Street), beginning at 3 P.M.

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The New Yorker Festival headquarters is at 14-20 West 40th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, in the big white tent directly across the street from Bryant Park. There you can find additional information about programs, purchase books by *New Yorker* contributors, and enjoy refreshments. Open Friday from 3 P.M. to 9 P.M., Saturday from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., and Sunday from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M.

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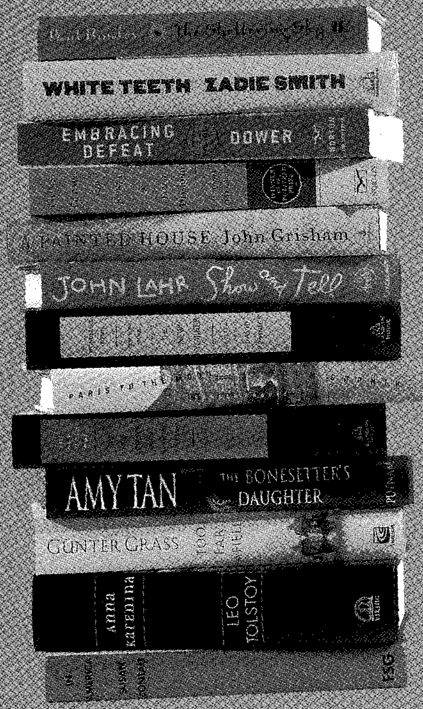
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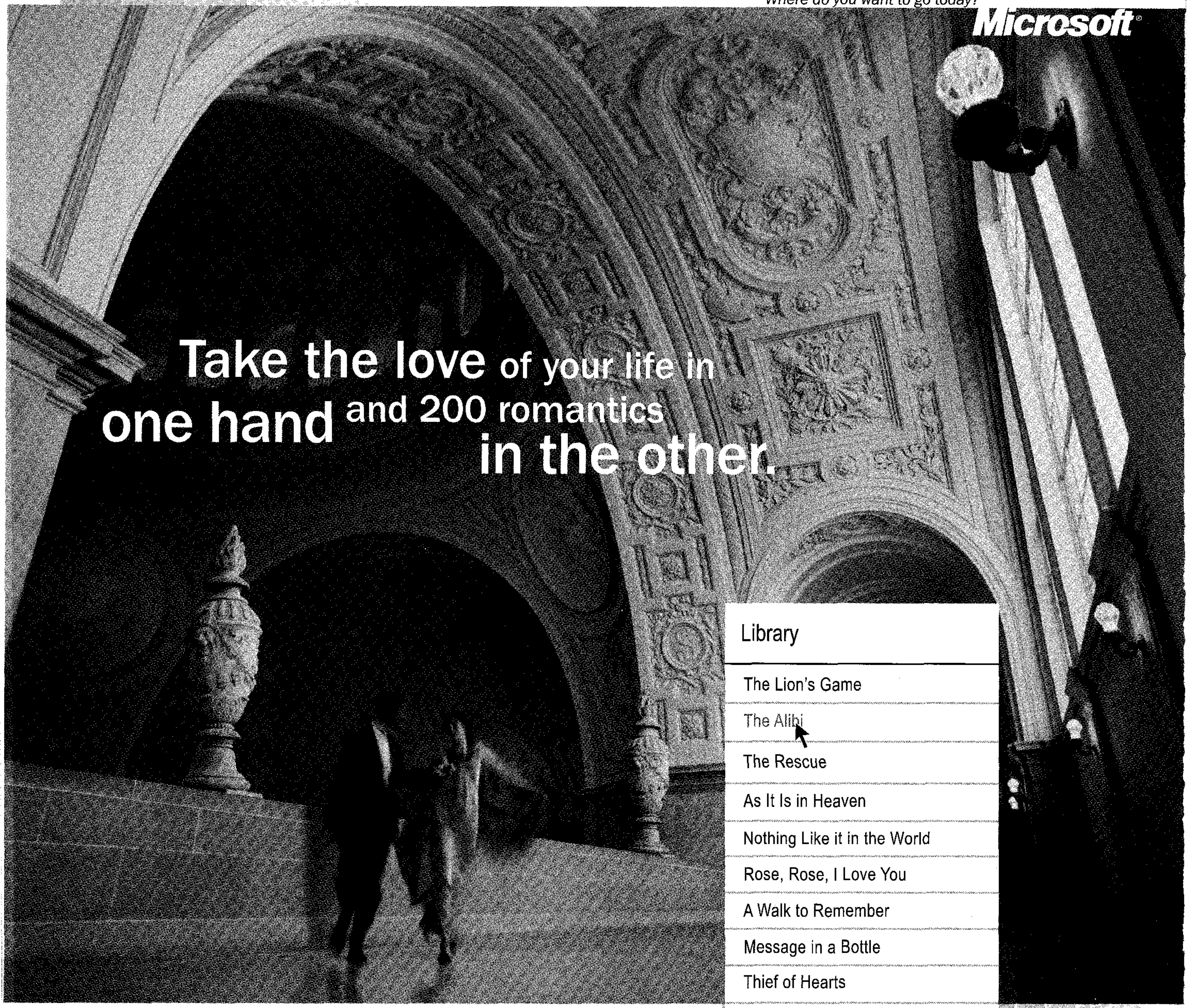
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THE SEA COMES IN LIKE NOTHING BUT THE SEA

The sea comes in like nothing but the sea,
but still a mind, knowing how seldom words

augment, reorders them before the breaker
and plays them as it comes. All that should sound

is water reaching into the rough space
the mind has cleared. The clearing of that mind

is nothing to the sea. The means whereby
the goats were chosen nothing to the god,

who asked only a breathing life of us,
to prove we were still there when it was doubted.

—*Glyn Maxwell*

without the police commission's knowledge. Membership was based not upon special training—in fact, the officers involved had none—but upon who happened to be chummiest with the chief.

Dino met with the Orange County district attorney and the commanding officer of the local New York State Police troop, and each conveyed the same message: the Wallkill Police Department was the least coöperative in the county; its members were figuratively and literally out of bounds. (For instance, the town cops had set up radar traps on two major highways, turf that was supposed to be patrolled exclusively by the state police.) Dino's response was to dispatch memos with the following edicts: turn over the Halloween robbery-assault files to the state police and defer to them in all future major-crime investigations; get the radar patrols off the major highways; disband the élite anti-crime squad. The response from within the department was to delay several days before yielding the files; to post flyers around the Wallkill Town Hall that said "Troopers are crybabies!"; and to disband the anti-crime squad only to reconstitute it immediately under a different code name.

At that point, the department's travails still qualified as an intramural matter. But early last year a civil suit, the case of a Wallkill police officer turned whistleblower—Moskowitz v. Coscette, et al.—went to trial in federal court, and the veil was lifted. Ari Moskowitz was a former New York City housing cop who had nurtured a boyhood dream of becoming a police officer, a focussed ambition that distinguished him from other Wallkill cops. What set him apart even more was his by-the-book rigidity, a stubborn refusal to go along to get along which seemed almost perverse. Moskowitz and Coscette disliked each other, and, when Coscette became chief, Moskowitz found himself marginalized. He was forced to drive the shoddiest patrol cars, stuck with the least desirable assignments, and, as the *Times Herald-Record* noted, "generally not included in the reindeer games—some of which were illegal." No protocol existed for Moskowitz to file a formal grievance, nor did his complaints to Coscette about favoritism and abuse of authority evoke a sympathetic response. So he sued both the Town of Wallkill and Coscette personally, alleging various civil-rights violations.

Because it was in his nature to do so, Dino—the public-spirited team player—appeared as a defense witness and described the plaintiff as "the most frequently disciplined officer in the department." But evidence showed that while Moskowitz had indeed been cited for disciplinary infractions more than any other Wallkill cop, only once had the charges been worthy of a sanction—suggesting that he was probably being unjustly maligned. From the rest of the testimony there emerged a dismal picture of a police department steeped in trivial corruption and insipid intrigue: Wallkill officers, while in uniform, had worked as security guards for a local Wal-Mart and been paid off the books; Coscette, while parked in his police cruiser outside a Chinese restaurant, had a sexual tryst with a woman not his wife (an allegation Coscette denies); Moskowitz, after being profanely berated by Mills one day in the town-hall parking lot, had issued the town supervisor a summons for disorderly conduct, only to have Coscette remove the paperwork from the court files. The jury ruled in Moskowitz's favor and awarded him two hundred thousand dollars (plus court costs), seventy-five thousand of which Coscette was ordered to pay himself. This turned out to be a fraction of what, in the end, the lawsuit cost the Town of Wallkill.

In the trial's aftermath, Dino felt both betrayed and galvanized. He now realized that he had been misguided by his own good-soldier instincts, and within days of the verdict he announced to the town board that the police commission had launched a thorough investigation of the police department. By then, the harassment of Moskowitz had resumed—his locker was vandalized, his car was spat upon, he was shunned—and at least one officer who'd testified in his behalf had also become a target. As the police-commission investigation proceeded, Dino, too, became a target. He and his wife found themselves tailgated for miles by Wallkill police cars. His real-estate signs were defaced. His car tires were slashed. One evening, a patrol car made several slow passes in front of Dino's home, and when he phoned to report the intimidation a police dispatcher said that the officer "must be lost."

By the time Dino and his colleagues completed their task, last July, Coscette had been out of work for two months. (The trial evidence hadn't done much to enhance his job security.) Dino's magnum opus, "Report by Town of Wallkill Police Commission: Investigation, Town of Wallkill Police Department," was not, it should be said, a great literary artifact. It frequently struck a sanctimonious tone, and it was plagued by redundancy. But it embodied one transcendent redeeming quality: it existed. And, to Dino's credit, it offended the right people.

Inside police headquarters, someone posted on a wall the *Times Herald-Record* story about the commission report ("POLICE DEPT.'S DIRTY LAUNDRY AIRED"). On photographs of Dino and a fellow police commissioner, nooses had been doodled around their necks. It bothered Dino that, when he showed the newspaper clipping to two members of the town board, they laughed. He was even more bothered when the board then went on to pass a resolution forbidding the commission to disseminate written reports to the media without prior approval—the implication being that if the commission's findings had never been disclosed all would be right within the Wallkill P.D.

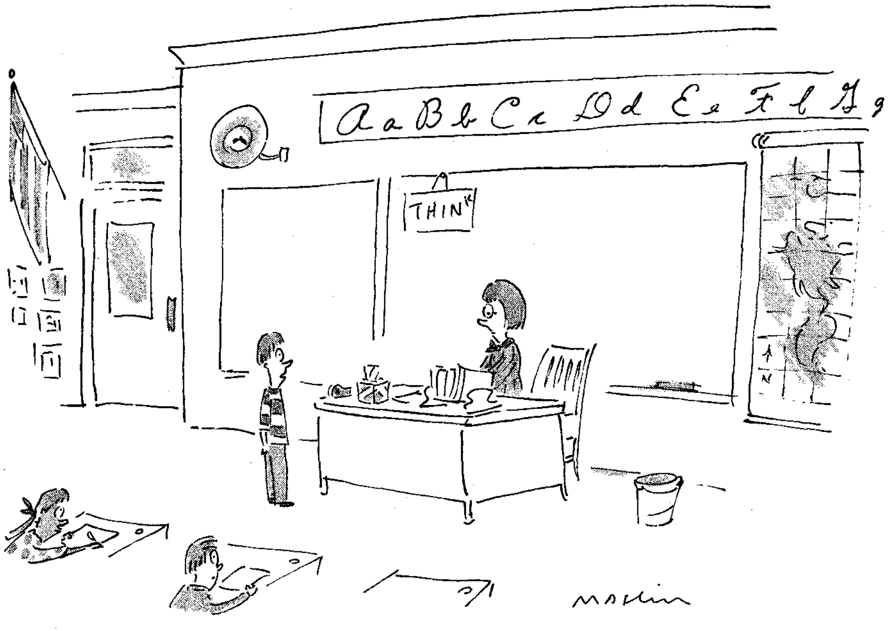
Last August, Dino sent a letter to the town board with a proposal that, predictably, wasn't well received. "We suggested disbanding the police department and having the state police come in instead," Dino told me recently. "There was anarchy, people weren't working. We felt that something was going to happen, somebody was going to get shot." The town board didn't answer directly, but during a special meeting the following month it entertained a radical proposal of its own: disband not the police department but the police commission.

This novel recommendation was the brainchild of Tom Nosworthy, Howard Mills's successor as town supervisor. A former school-bus driver and a technician for a utility company, Nosworthy had served nine years on the town board before ascending to the throne. His motion narrowly failed—two ayes, three nays—which disappointed the cops who'd gathered that night in the town-hall parking lot, anticipating a celebration. After the meeting, Nosworthy retreated to a nearby bar where, by his own account, he had "three or four drinks" before climbing into his town-owned Ford Bronco. The Wallkill cop who later pulled him over as he attempted to drive home described the Bronco as weaving "from the double yellow line to the fog line." Nosworthy attributed his erratic driving to the car's faulty steering mechanism—the time had come, he said, for the town to replace his vehicle—but added that he was grateful for the episode because it revealed the capriciousness Wallkill cops were capable of. "I've heard stories of officers doing this to others," he told the *Times Herald-Record*. "But now that this kind of bullying happened to me, I know we've got to fix this department."

As epiphanies go, it was too little too late. As a practical matter, the task of fixing the department was already on the agenda of the Attorney General, because Dino, convinced that he had virtually no political allies in Wallkill, had turned the police commission's findings over to the state. It was almost an afterthought when, early last January, the town board made a second attempt to abolish the commission. This time Nosworthy had lined up the votes in advance, and he prevailed. Two weeks after that, the Attorney General sued.

Not long ago, when I first visited the Middletown offices of the *Times Herald-Record*, before I got around to asking about the Wallkill cops I had a more rudimentary question: Where was Wallkill? I hadn't been able to find it on a road map. Or, rather, I did see a small dot next to the word "Wallkill," but it denoted a village in adjacent Ulster County. Nathan Hegedus, a young reporter, confirmed for me that, yes, there was a *village* by that name, which had a population of two thousand, but that it was unrelated to the *town* of Wallkill. And it was the town—sixty-four square miles, twenty-six thousand people, home of the notorious police department—that, owing to a cartographic technicality, didn't appear to exist. Or was it a technicality? In back-to-back conversations with Mike Levine, the editor of the *Times Herald-Record*, and another reporter, I heard both characterize Wallkill with the apt cliché "There's no there there." There was literally no "Wallkill" post office, library, Zip Code, or school district. "A lot of people who live in Wallkill don't even know they live in Wallkill," Hegedus told me.

The story of how Wallkill got to be what it has become is rooted in the industrial decline of its intimate neighbor, Middletown. In 1957, the O.&W. Railroad vacated what had once been a busy passenger station and maintenance hub, and over the next few years other dominoes fell. Homegrown manufacturers of products like hacksaw blades and push lawnmowers and ladies' handbags got nudged over the brink, casualties, in part, of the lost rail link. At that point, whatever entrepreneurial opportunities still existed in the local economy tended to be situated in the ripe-for-suburbanization expanse of dairy farms beyond the city limits. The first Middletown merchant to glimpse the future was Ed Lloyd, the owner of a neighborhood grocery store, who in the early sixties relocated in Wallkill, almost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THINK
Martin

"I don't have my homework, Miss Flynn—my parents forgot to do it."

two miles from downtown, on what is now Route 211. With room to diversify, Lloyd began selling under one roof not only groceries but off-brand clothing, hardware, housewares, pets, toys, garden supplies—the Wal-Mart merchandising vision, more or less. When Orange Plaza, the township's first big shopping center, opened on Route 211, in 1972, many of its tenants were Middletown retailers. Other merchants followed, on a stretch of road that everyone called "the Miracle Mile."

Today, the Miracle Mile actually extends more than three miles, and the result is a classic specimen of heedless, soulless suburban sprawl: mall-to-mall car dealerships, wholesale furniture and mattress outlets, motels, the usual fast-food franchises, quick-lube garages, drive-through drugstores. Lloyd and most of the local retailers are now gone, superseded by chain-owned specialty stores and discount megastores. This sort of metastatic cheesiness exists throughout America, of course. But in Wallkill the virulence of the blight is stunning, an illustration of how the relentless banality of a landscape can create a vacuum where a sense of community might otherwise have flourished.

When I drove out Route 211 for a look, I covered about a mile and a half before I saw a sign with an arrow and the words "Wallkill Town Center." Turning, I immediately encountered a cigar-and-cigarette outlet, a Red Lobster restaurant, a K mart, a Price Chopper, a Service Merchandise, and a Circuit City—but no village green surrounded by a whitewashed rail fence, not even a concrete public square with a heroic monument to the pioneer bulldozer crews. In the parking lot of a plumbing-supply showroom that proclaimed itself "The World's Greatest Toilet Bowl Store," I turned around and headed back to the Miracle Mile. Up the road another mile, just past a Pizza Hut, was a Pier 1 Imports store, and next to it stood a brown brick box about the same size—the Wallkill Town Hall and police headquarters.

On a snowy night in February, I went there for a meeting of the town board, the main business of which was the Attorney General's insistence that the town take specific steps to repair the consequences of its negligence. The day before, the town had signed a consent decree drafted by the Attorney General which, among other things, required it to place video cameras in police cars and implement a civilian-complaint procedure—and in exchange the state dropped its lawsuit. At the meeting, Nosworthy read a statement notable chiefly for its disingenuousness, in which he announced that "it has always been the intent of the Town Board to work with the Attorney General's office." (As it happened, the terms of the consent decree were identical to those the Attorney General had insisted upon three months earlier; in characteristic Wallkill fashion, the process had been protracted with nothing gained but legal expenses and embarrassment.)

Afterward, I walked to my car, which was parked in the same lot where Ari Moskowitz and Howard Mills had had the confrontation that resulted in a disorderly-conduct citation. Then I drove along the Miracle Mile, passing the Wal-Mart where the Wallkill cops had moonlighted, and from there swung by the spot where Chief Coscette allegedly had his furtive sexual escapade. How, I asked myself, had these small-potatoes peccadilloes led to the Attorney General's lawsuit?

It was a question I had also put to Dino, who replied, "What we had here was a breakdown of the government. There was a problem within the police department, and when those facts became known to the town board they perpetrated a coverup. Take a look at this town. We built it by paving over the countryside. This is what we're stuck with. Is there anything we can do with it? Not really. We have to live with our past."

What had happened in Wallkill, in other words, was that it had become a place where accountability by public officials somehow wasn't part of the social contract. The odd pieces all fit together: the hollow-at-the-core aura of the town, the surly swagger of cops making up their own rules, the befuddled inertia of the elected leaders. And what was the germ of that syndrome? Maybe it was that—if you were looking for a metaphor—for all the concrete that had been poured along the Miracle Mile, the Town of Wallkill never spent a dime to build sidewalks. ♦

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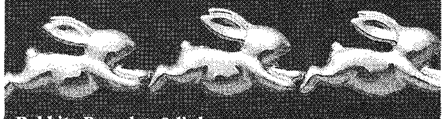

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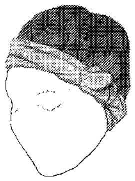

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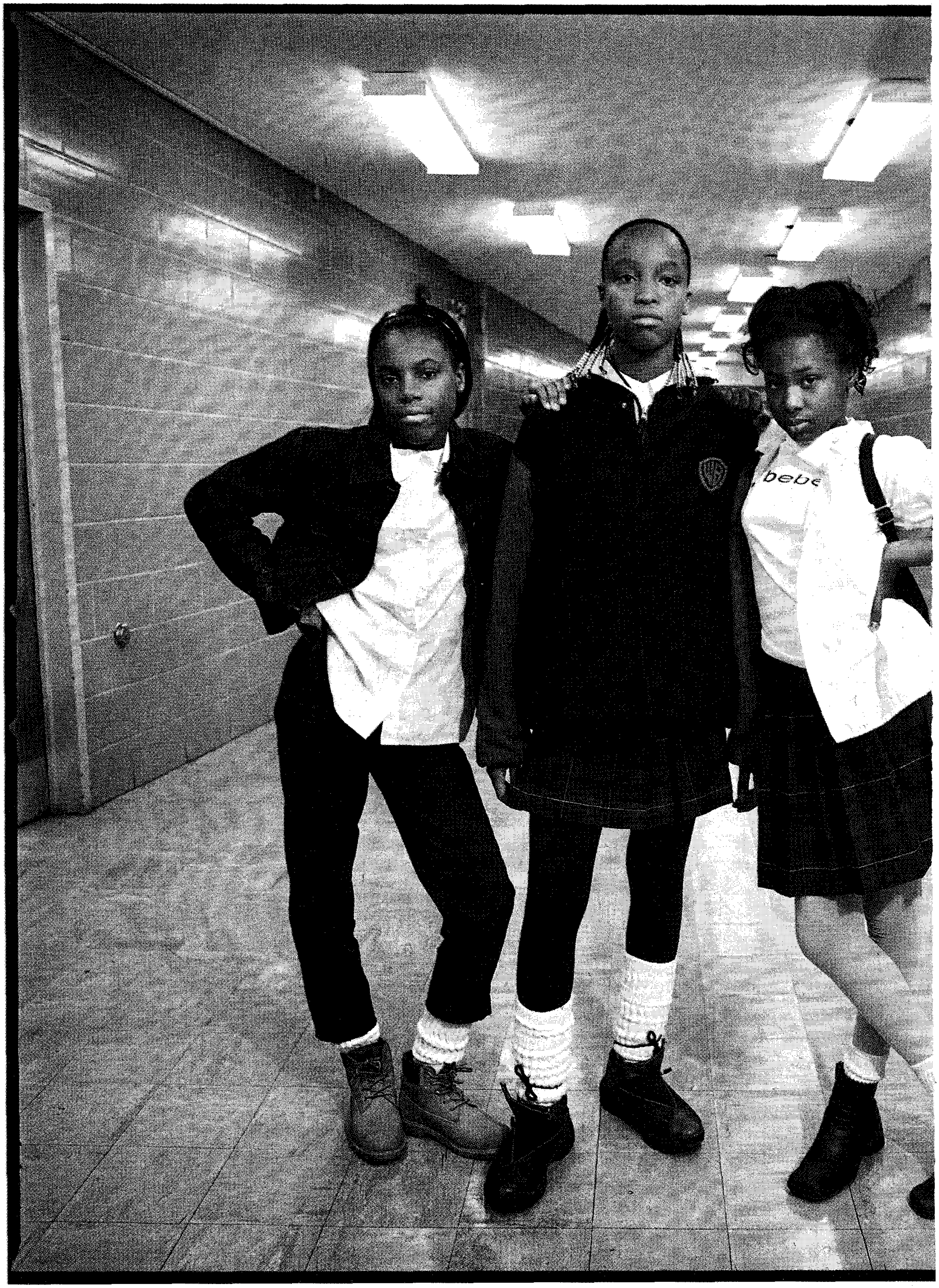
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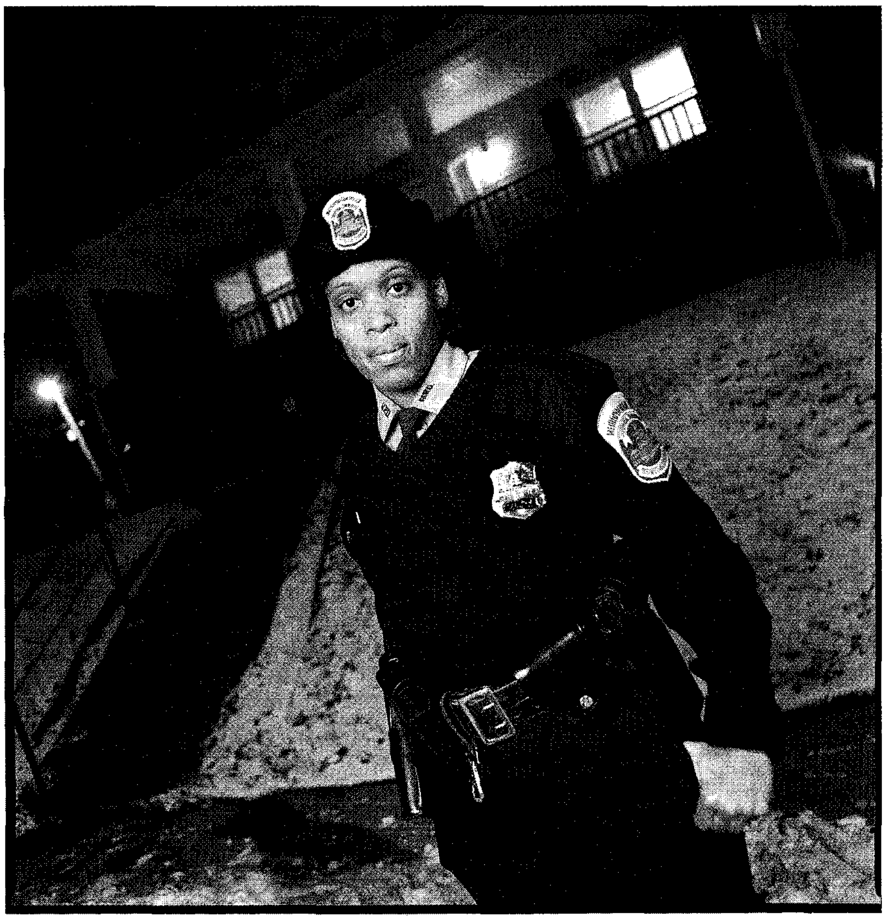
A REPORTER AT LARGE

AFTER WELFARE

Working two jobs, Elizabeth Jones does her best for her family. But is it enough?

BY KATHERINE BOO



When children on the easternmost tip of the District of Columbia try to explain where they live, they often say "by the Shrimp Boat," a worn seafood carryout whose small, barred windows look east to the city's hardest ghetto and west to the United States Capitol. That the Shrimp Boat has come to stand for a neighborhood of ten thousand people speaks less to the quality of its crab legs than to the featurelessness of the surrounding landscape. Among large housing projects and old brick homes, there is no other landmark. At the start of the twentieth century, this patch of the District was known for the industry of its inhabitants, black craftsmen who bivouacked in shanties while constructing the monuments of the federal city. At the end of the century, the supposed indolence of communities like the Shrimp Boat helped inspire in the federal city the most celebrated social-policy initiative in a generation—the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996.

Last August 22nd was the fourth anniversary of the passage of the welfare-reform bill. Five miles from the Capitol, at a stand outside the Shrimp Boat, extra-

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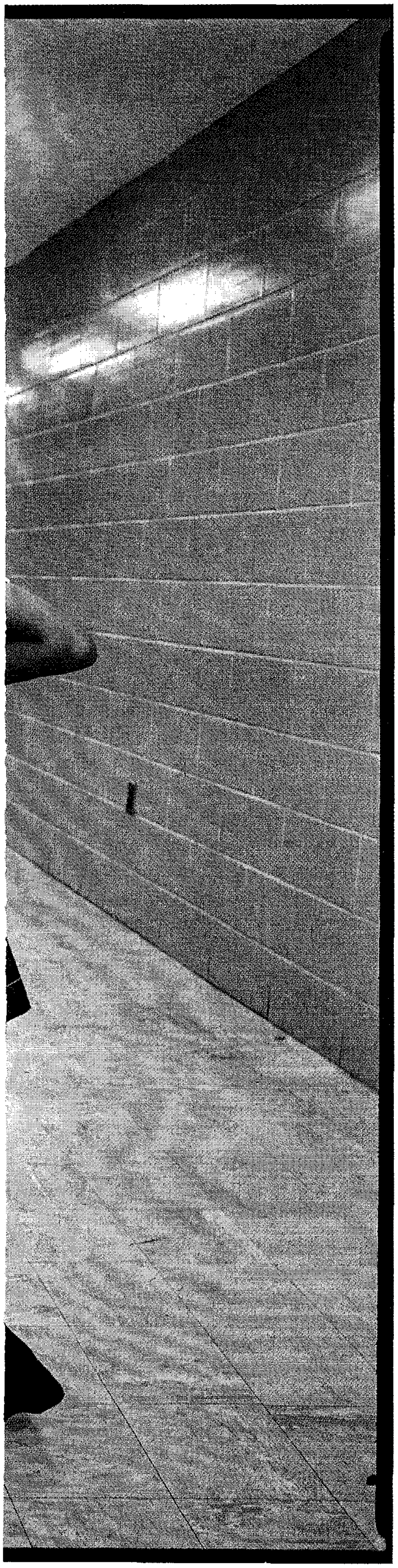


Jones's daughter, Drenika (center, with friends), who watches her brothers when her mother (above), is on duty, is increasingly adult outside the home.

large T-shirts flapped in the breeze like a country's colors at the border. Their inscriptions testified to a culture's changing aspirations. The wrestling hulks and marijuana leaves of previous years had been supplanted by exhortations in the red, black, and green of African independence. "Educate 2 Elevate," the shirts read. "Each 1, Teach 1." Such sun-drenched sentiments moved me more than I cared to admit, for I had come to the Shrimp Boat to see three children whose elevation I particularly root for.

Dernard, Drenika, and Wayne were ten, eleven, and thirteen, respectively, last August. I have known them, first as a newspaper reporter and then as a friend, since 1996, when they were living in public housing with their mother, Elizabeth Jones, who was then twenty-six and had been on welfare for nine years. Worried that the world would mistake her good kids for ghetto thugs, Elizabeth decided that welfare reform could be her family's rescue. She got a secondhand suit from a charitable organization and reached up for the socioeconomic ladder's lowest rung.

Since the law's passage, Miss Cookie, as Shrimp Boat kids call Elizabeth, has done everything that reformers could reasonably ask of the daughter of a single mother and a father she never met who, by the age of twenty-one, had a high-school diploma, a history of victimization by rape and domestic abuse, and three babies by three hit-and-run men. After a volunteer clerkship and a course in WordPerfect, she got, at twenty-seven, the first real job of her life, as a receptionist, with a salary of twenty-two thousand dollars a year. Not long after, she saw, on the side of a bus, a recruitment poster for the Metropolitan Police Department. In September of 1998, she graduated from the police academy and became an officer on the night shift in Southeast D.C., the city's most violent quadrant—her own.

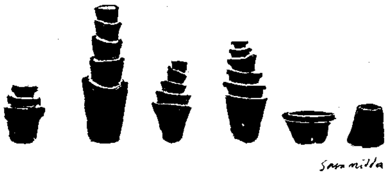
Cookie is funny and smart and tells the truth even when it makes her look bad. She dislikes melodrama and is, in her own estimation, a mediocre cop. ("For real, I'd rather go to school for mortuary science," she says. "Dead people, you just pump them up and they don't talk back.") She is also, at age thirty-one, a Shrimp Boat phenomenon, subject to high fives when she takes her boys to Campbell's barbershop for a shapeup. She is among the most successful former welfare recipients in the District's inner city.

One premise of welfare reform, which transfers federal power to local government, is that the public and private institutions closest to the poor can best see their needs. But the inverse is also true: the closer you get to families like Elizabeth's, the more clearly you see the flaws in the infrastructure that serves the children of the post-welfare world.

On the August day last year when I arrived at Elizabeth's house, it was lunchtime, and, as usual, she wasn't there. Her police shift runs all night, and after it ended, just before dawn, she went downtown to work as a security guard—a part-time job she has taken in order to meet her car payments. Her children had been home alone since seven the night before. In the living room, a pillow-lipped slacker on MTV's "Real World Miami" wore a T-shirt that said "F**k work." In the kitchen, eleven-year-old Drenika lit the stove and dropped a clump of ramen into a pot of water. Drenika's heart-shaped face has a perpetual squint, as if a private sun were blasting into her eyes. That day, she wanted to run the streets with Rico, a thirteen-year-old who had begun showing an interest after she started refusing to wear her eyeglasses. But ever since Drenika was seven, when a day-care subsidy stopped because of a municipal error, she has been taking care of her younger brother, Dernard, who is bright and anxious, and her older brother, Wayne, who is learning-disabled. The day before, Drenika had packed a plastic bag in anticipation of an overnight stay with her father, who didn't materialize. The bag was still on a chair by the door.

"Dernard, you want one boiled egg with your noodles or two?" Drenika asked. Her fingernails were bitten to the quick. "And which one of you was so trifling as to leave your gum stuck on the floor?"

Dernard licked powdered chicken seasoning from his palm as he waited for his egg. He was worried, he told his sister, about his imminent entrance into fifth grade, where it might become clear to the meaner of his classmates that he is not a club-level thug—"that all I am is a nerd without glasses," he told Drenika, mournfully. Drenika, putting out plates, agreed with her younger brother's assessment: "You'd be beat every day at my school." She recommended silence in class until he grew taller.



Then thirteen-year-old Wayne, still in his pajamas, emerged from the basement, where he had spent the morning in a world of his own devising. Elizabeth cannot afford private tutoring or therapy for her son, who is six feet two and whose eyes tilt slightly toward the ceiling. To help Wayne make a neighborhood friend, she had recently registered him for a local peewee-football team. But his mother is gentle with him, as the world at large sometimes is not, and in her absence Wayne prefers the companionship he has created in his mother's old toy chest. With deft craftsmanship and small thefts from school and dollar stores, he has been perfecting, over half his life, a private shrine to middle-class comfort. In Wayne's wooden box—do not call it a doll house—pipe-cleaner curtains swag just so. The sister has a parrot to talk to when she's lonely, which is not often, thanks to the businessman father and the live-in grandmother. In the bedroom, the windows are not taped over with cardboard. There is, instead, a classic boyhood enchantment: a tall ship that has somehow slipped into a narrow-necked bottle.

At lunchtime, working security at a chemists' convention, Elizabeth stole a minute to make a laminated name badge for each of her children: "Hello, My Name Is . . . Wayne. Architect. Washington, D.C." Meanwhile, in a frame house in the Shrimp Boat, Drenika tried to enforce the standards that she'd learned from her mother the striver: "Don't be ghetto, Wayne, eating all standing up." And the three children sat and ate their ramen and egg in silence.

Elizabeth Jones earns around thirty-nine thousand dollars a year from her two jobs. Compared with the average income of those who leave the welfare rolls in the District (seventeen thousand dollars, an Urban Institute study says), this is an astronomical sum. Compared with what is required to meet the basic needs of a family of four in Washington (fifty-two thousand dollars, says another study), it is not. Elizabeth's rent

"Did you remember to whack the cat?"

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and car payments consume twelve hundred and twenty dollars of her sixteen-hundred-dollar monthly take-home from the police department. Her other bills include a two-hundred-and-eighty-two-dollar monthly payment on a student loan she took out years ago for a fly-by-night trade school, so a second job is essential. The material rewards of the two jobs are real: a car, a Suzuki Esteem, with the names of her children stencilled on the rear window, like a university affiliation, and a rented frame house four crucial blocks from East Capitol Dwellings, a notorious public-housing project where she used to live. In the small dining room, there is a computer, on which the kids can play Frogger, which they do frequently, because their mother, whose work keeps her abreast of the perils of the neighborhood, forbids them to play outside when she's not there. The children no longer have to wear shoes with the size stamped conspicuously on the sole (stigmata of Payless), and, until Elizabeth decides that she can't afford it, they enjoy a legitimate cable-television hookup, instead of the bootleg connections known around here as "fable." But when Dernard hears gunshots outside the house at midnight and shakes with terror, he can't cry out for his mother. He has to page her.

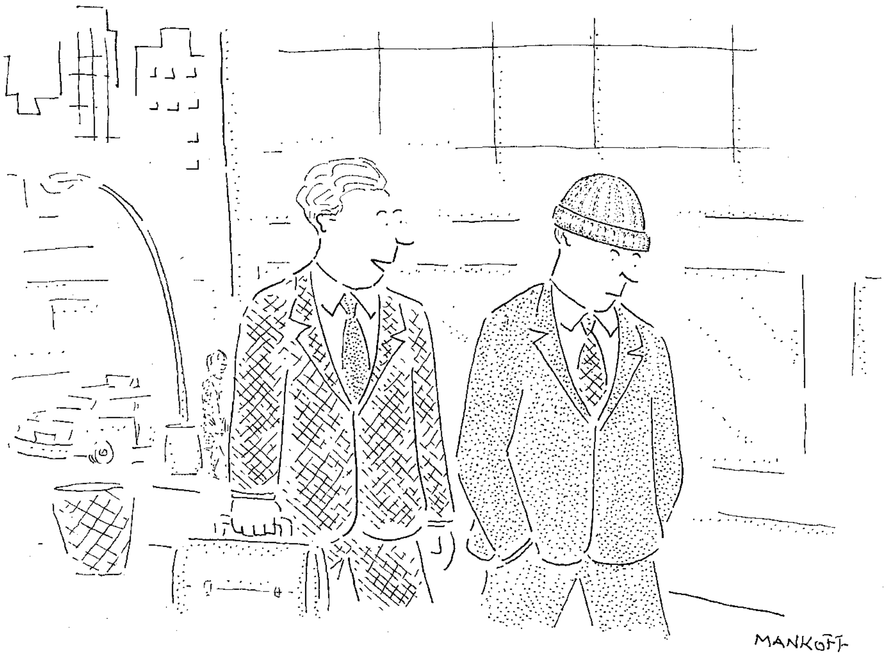
Elizabeth, who as a rule does not belabor the obvious, rarely talks of fatigue. She does speak of missing her kids: "Like, I'm at work chasing after some crazy person and I am thinking, Have my kids taken a bath, did they do their homework, did they turn out the lights—the electricity bill is breaking me—did they eat dinner, did they go outside like they're not supposed to, did they watch something terrible on TV?" One of her happiest weeks of last year was the time she got bronchitis and had to stay home with her children.

Welfare reform has been chronicled by journalists, academics, and policymakers who are thriving in America's culture of opportunity, and the assumptions of the new law tend to ratify those of the professional class: work leads inexorably to moral (and, by extension, civic) improvement; and the economic good of a mother—a self-sufficient working mother—leads inexorably to the good of a child. If these newly working mothers are weaned of their dependence on public assistance, they will become, to put it bluntly, more like us: less violent, less isolated, less likely to use drugs and alcohol, and better parents. Indeed, the women of the Shrimp Boat—part of a group described not long ago as a permanent underclass—are steadily becoming more like the American middle class.

Washington is divided into four unequal sections, radiating out from the United States Capitol. The Shrimp Boat sits toward the end of East Capitol Street, one of the dividing lines. In 1996, only three per cent of householders in the projects surrounding the carryout earned the majority of their income; most of the rest collected public assistance. Today, one-third work for the greater part of their income, an improvement at least partially attributable to a good economy. As Shrimp Boat parents spend more time at work, their daily dilemmas increasingly mirror those of the middle class, which long ago discovered that the interests of career-conscious parents and demanding children sometimes clash. In the Shrimp Boat, though, these imperatives collide with particular velocity. These families have one parent. Child-care options do not include live-in sitters or after-school piano lessons. The sixth-grade school day in the ghetto begins with a metal detector and a mandatory frisk. "A baby's first words are supposed to be the ABCs," Drenika once observed in frustration. "But where we live their first word be 'bitch.' "

The physical privations of inner-city children are often overstated, and their parents' resourcefulness undersold. A more logical worry, it seems to me, is whether a cycle of opportunity really is replacing the cycle of pathology, even for the luckiest children of reform. Ghetto children are told regularly to "be positive," and, until faced with overwhelming evidence to the contrary, they usually are. But the exodus of mothers into the workplace has created something new and not wholly positive in the Shrimp Boat: a world of free-range children at the mercy of unreformed institutions that, in the absence of parents, are all they have.

On a sweltering evening later that August week, I happened to be in a row house near Elizabeth's where a mother had returned from the first full-time job she'd held in fifteen years and found her fourteen-year-old daughter beating her nineteen-year-old son with an ironing board. The boy had stolen the girl's cheeseburger—the remainder of a two-for-one special she'd bought at McDonald's and squirrelled under a bed for dinner. "I'm not going to lose another job for this Tom-and-Jerry business I have to



"Hang in there, Dave—time heals all haircuts."

come home to!" the mother yelled. After dialling 911, she raised a cane to "knock this temper out of you-all's head." As the grievances of mother, sister, and brother intensified and enlarged, I noticed for the first time a seven-year-old girl watching from a doorway, cheeks distended. Her name was Starletta. She was literally holding her breath.

I left the house with a perceptive beat cop named Brad Wagner, whom the kids call Officer Superman, or Officer Supe-Doggy-Dogg. We drove past skeletons of tents from a long-gone gospel revival and into the Shrimp Boat's busiest crack market, where in the previous year two events had altered the landscape: a fifty-six-year-old grandmother had been murdered while shooing toddlers out of the path of bullets, and the authorities had undertaken some improvements. To hinder the drive-through drug trade, the city barricaded the block with metal fencing and erected, in the newly created cul-de-sac, a set of monkey bars. The old heads observe that these improvements prevent police cars from pursuing armed drug dealers while, at the same time, luring toddlers into the crosshairs. But on that August midnight, like most others, the children of the Shrimp Boat cheerfully assumed the risk. To surf the jungle gym's top tier is not merely to rise above the addicts bargaining at curbside. It is to secure a private glimpse, over the viscous Anacostia River, of the white-lit federal city. A boy, naked but for a diaper, hung like a bat from the bars. A girl who looked about eight waved hello. "We don't have to go to bed tonight," she called, and seemed surprised when we walked over. Afterward, Officer Superman said that sometimes he felt that his service to the children of the community had little to do with public safety; it was, rather, being a nearby adult. "What these kids want more than anything," he said, "is just evidence that they exist."

In September, during recess one day in the second week of seventh grade, Drenika and her best friend, Erica, sat self-consciously by the basketball court of Ronald H. Brown Middle School. The school sits on drained swampland, and over the summer nature had reclaimed a bit of the court. It was tufted now, which skewed the bounce, but Drenika and Erica were only marginally interested in watching the game. They were hoping to be watched themselves. On their dark skin, under the oxford button-downs and green plaid skirts that public-school officials mandated last year in the name of educational focus, they had customized themselves in glistening white ink. "Sexy," Erica's biceps read. Drenika's said, "Baddest Chick/53rd Street Mob." On her bony wrist were the words "Love Rico." The two eleven-year-olds spoke coolly of a classmate—his mother had a scrub job—who couldn't afford a gel body-write pen. He had committed the social felony of decorating himself with Wite-Out.

Over the years, Elizabeth has called me periodically with unsettling bulletins: that she has found the bullet-ridden body of a teen-ager she'd been close to since he was a youngster; that she is standing in the middle of her ransacked living room, intruder's whereabouts known, and the police, whom she's called eight times, have not responded. I have never heard her more undone than when Drenika, then barely nine, got her period. Elizabeth, born to a mother who got pregnant at sixteen, became pregnant herself at sixteen. She has impressed on her daughter the importance of breaking that chain. But Drenika, who is expected to act grown up when she is home—who has cooked a perfect sausage link since she was seven—is increasingly adult when she goes outside it. It's as if the ghetto pose that Elizabeth has herself worked so hard to shed had rematerialized on her daughter's slender frame. Elizabeth worries when she learns about a girl in Drenika's school who is pregnant, the one for whom the school guards have been collecting baby clothes. She sees a note written by the nine-year-old daughter of one of her girlfriends, inviting a fellow fifth grader to have sex with her again, and worries more. She sees her own pretty daughter in a throng of boys and feels sick. Drenika is a restive pre-teen target—one whose single mother works the late shift.

Elizabeth, trying to start a conversation with her daughter lately, sometimes feels as if she were interrogating a perp. But one day, as the school year began, Drenika painstakingly informed her notebook of everything that hadn't happened over the latest summer of covering for her mother at home: "I wanted to go to Orlando Florida to Disney World and go shopping. I also so wanted to go away for camp my friend did for a week." She wanted to play with kids her own age, sleep late, go to Senegal and New Jersey and North Carolina and Ocean City, Maryland. What she usually got was house lockdown with two brothers who rely on her to interpret the world. One day, I came upon her in her bedroom, where, feeling grown, she had recently packed eleven years' worth of dolls into a trash bag. Squinting into the mirror, she knotted her T-shirt and pulled a skullcap over her eyes. As Lil' Kim sang on a tiny radio, Drenika danced. The room fairly shook with her impatience.

When Elizabeth was on welfare, she sometimes watched "All My Children." She also volunteered regularly at her children's schools, keeping an eye on their teachers and friends. This year, her schedule does not permit such luxuries. When her police shift ends, at 4 A.M., she sleeps for two hours, wakes her children for three different schools, sees one to the bus and drives the two others, along with four neighborhood kids who depend on her, to their schools. Then she heads downtown to her part-time job as a private security guard. When she finishes, at 5 P.M., she fetches her children and the four others from their schools, drops them all at their doors, and goes to the police station to start her shift. On days off, she sleeps.

Because she cannot personally watch over Drenika, she signs her up for supervised distractions: track; after-school tutoring; cheerleading for the Bison, the football team for which she also registered Wayne and Dernard. Elizabeth is blunt when she talks to her daughter about her own sexual activity, which began in junior high school and led to five pregnancies, three children, and nine years on welfare. ("But you made it with three kids," Drenika counters.) Elizabeth doesn't allow her own longtime boyfriend, a maintenance worker, to stay overnight. She puts a call block on the telephone to stop Rico from phoning Drenika, and spies on her, with Dernard in the role of informer.

Still, Elizabeth knows that the best way to protect Drenika, who had straight A's at the beginning of elementary school and mostly C's at the end, is to keep her interested in school. So Elizabeth petitioned school authorities to get her daughter reassigned from the infamous Shrimp Boat middle school, Evans, to a place where Drenika had a better chance of getting an education. A public middle school on Capitol Hill had encouraging test scores, but it had seven times as many names on the waiting list as it had places for children who live outside Capitol Hill. Elizabeth settled on Ronald H. Brown Middle School, which is five stops from home on the Washington Metro. There, another legend of the District ghetto, a no-nonsense principal in a Grace Jones flattop and a turtleneck, had for years been converting hard cases into readers. By the time Drenika enrolled, however, the principal had taken a job in a public school in Maryland.

Students at Ron Brown do far better on standardized tests than students at Evans. But better does not mean good. Last year at Ron Brown—a year in which one-fifth of the students were judged by tests to be illiterate—a physical-education teacher pleaded guilty to having sex with two fourteen-year-old girls. One was a learning-disabled student he attacked in a bathroom and attempted to silence with a twenty-dollar bill. She later gave birth to his child.

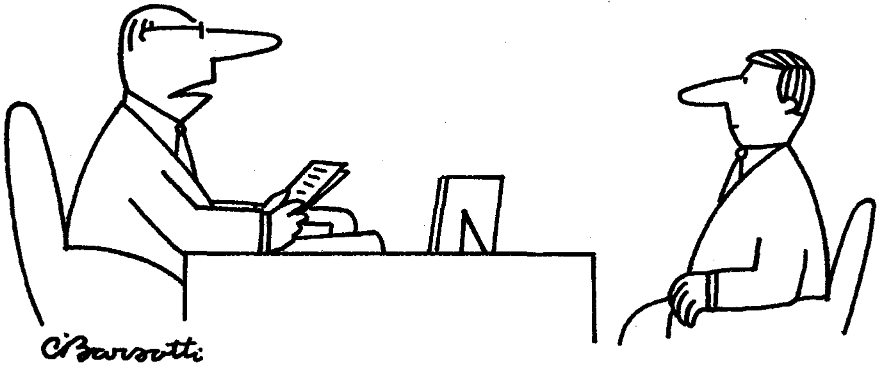
By September, a new physical-education teacher had already been suspended; and after recess Drenika and Erica had ample time to speculate on the reason, because two of their six classes weren't held that day—their teachers weren't there. Drenika and her classmates were put in an unused classroom, where they passed the time talking to each other. Later in the day, the new principal, a warm, earnest woman in her forties, asked what I thought of the school. I remarked that Drenika and the others had spent one-third of their school day doing nothing. She told me that substitutes were in short supply in the system and admonished me to be positive.

Drenika's last class of that day was geography. At its start, the teacher wrote the daily "objective" on the blackboard. Objectives, like uniforms, are part of the new urban catechism of disciplined, outcome-oriented education. This day's objective: Students would review last week's work. Hands shot up. "Miss Carney, we reviewed last week's work yesterday." Miss Carney moved to Objective B: Students would write their reflections about the class. "Write about things you enjoyed, like when we went outside for class," she told them. "It's important that I know what you think, so I can do something you like more." Miss Carney turned on a boom box and soft jazz filled the room. Drenika sucked her pen and then, chin resting on her desk, set to work:

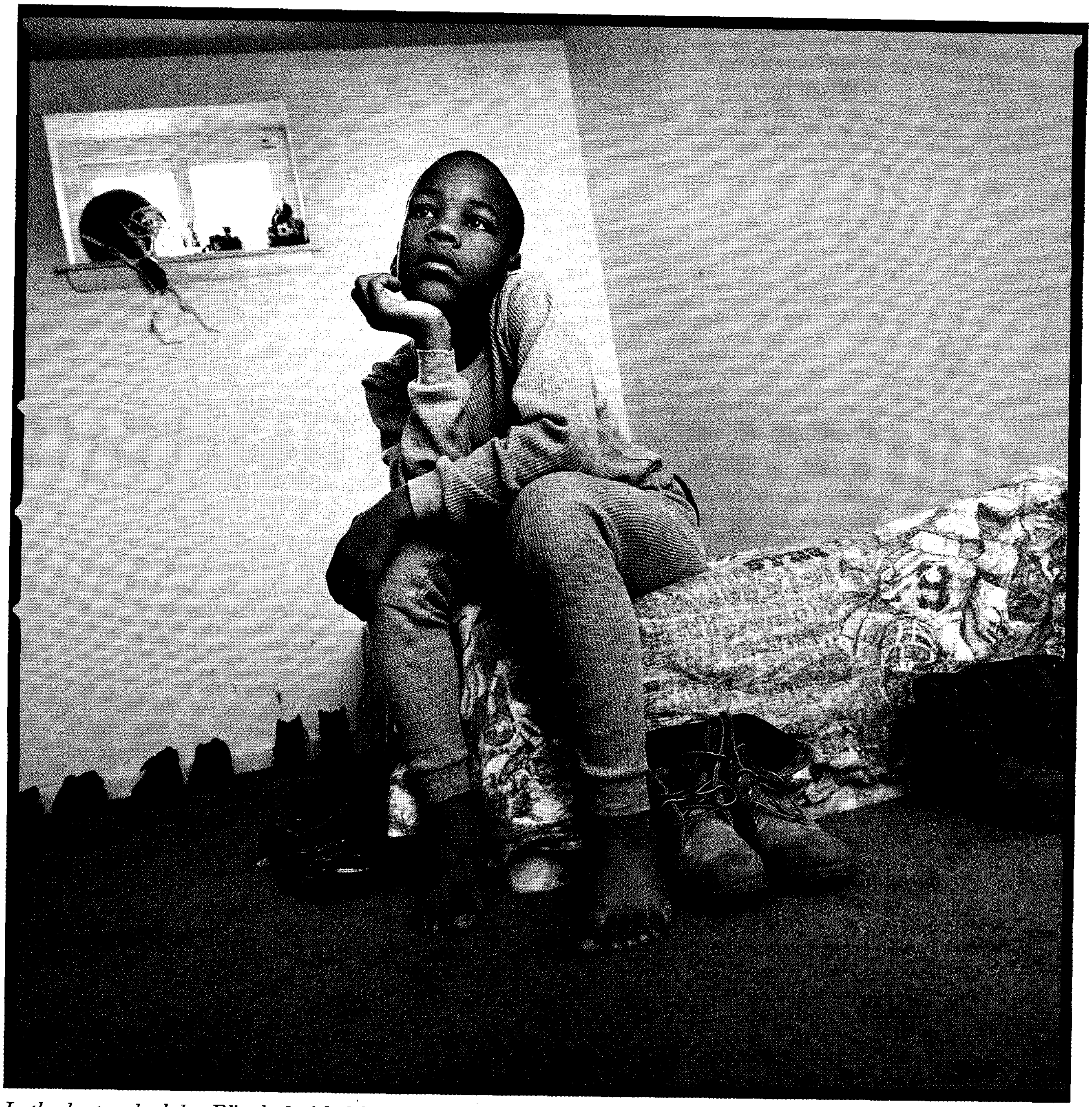
> Semptember 15. The first day of class I thought Mrs. Carney was going to talk a hole in my head but she did not. We played a game called Guess Who we played that for a little while she gave use some Bazooka gum but I gave my to Erica because I did not have a taste for sweets. Something I like about her is that she relate to you she don't give me a hard time. Her homework is easy if you try to do it.

Drenika then pulled out some Crayola pencils and drew sky-blue clouds around her heading, "A Reflection." She really likes her seventh-grade teachers, she told me later. "This year they stoop to our level."

The bell sounded, and students turned in their books. For complex reasons involving a lack of lockers, they were not allowed to take books home. Careering past engraved oak signs that adorn the school's foyer—celebrating the Philosophy Club, the Math Club, and other extracurriculars that do not in fact exist at Ron Brown—four hundred and seventy children poured into the streets. Now Drenika was supposed to go to one



"As a company, and as individuals, we are without irony. Will that bother you?"



In the charter school that Elizabeth picked for Dernard—her bookish son—students sat at empty desks, doing nothing.

extracurricular that Ron Brown does offer—track. Instead, she declared she had "growing pains," and she, Erica, and her other best friends headed for the subway station, hot on the trail of Rico, who had been banned from after-school athletics because of low grades.

And there he was, sheepish and handsome on the elevated platform on Minnesota Avenue, whispering in the ear of another seventh-grade girl.

"I heard he was out with a dirty girl . . ." Drenika's friends, loyally, started to sing.

"I don't want him no more," Drenika told them gloomily as the train glided home.

But wait, her friends told her. Look: Rico was in the next car. He was getting off at her stop. And for the next few hours, as Elizabeth pictured her daughter running wind sprints, Drenika was alone with the boy whose name rated prime real estate on the inside of her wrist.

The new anodyne for bad urban schools is "choice." Here, though, giving parents a wealth of educational options sometimes presents a familiar inner-city conundrum: What if all your choices are bad ones? Elizabeth had to obtain special permission to win for Drenika the poor education she's getting now—an education that may well be an improvement over the middle school closer to home. To judge by test scores, it may also be an improvement over most of the twelve publicly funded charter schools that have sprouted up around the Shrimp Boat.

Last spring, I occasionally accompanied Elizabeth to one of these schools. Construction-paper flowers bloomed in its front windows. In the principal's office, there were handsome brochures

Orioles
BALTIMORE
MARCH of DIMES
WALKAMERICA
1999

Wayne has built, in boxes, a shrine to middle-class life. "He always makes stuff that is," his brother says. "Only, he makes it better."

from the Massachusetts company that runs it. Elizabeth was particularly moved by the school's namesake: a D.C. police officer who'd grown up in the Shrimp Boat and was murdered here.

It was to this promising place—the Robert Louis Johnson, Jr., Arts and Technology Academy—that Elizabeth entrusted her fourth grader, Dernard, who the year before had tested at a seventh-grade reading level and had beaten the daylights out of a boy who had teased him one day in the bathroom. As usual, she joined the PTA, where for most of the year she constituted one-third of the regular attendance.

The Shrimp Boat ten-year-old who gets off track at school greatly increases his odds of not reaching the age of twenty. Elizabeth understands this viscerally. A year earlier, a teen-ager had come pounding on her door. "Miss Cookie! Tank down!" Tank, the seventeen-year-old son of Elizabeth's closest friend in the neighborhood, a kid I'd always found dull and decent, was dying of gunshot wounds behind Elizabeth's house. He had stolen fifty dollars from a female crackhead whose male friend had a street-sweeping Mac 12. Paramedics reported difficulty extracting from Tank's hand his own rinky-dink .38. Younger children on the block expressed dismay at the capture of the killer, who in addition to being a popular neighborhood drug dealer drove an ice-cream truck.

Perhaps Elizabeth should have reconsidered her choice of schools when, shortly after the academic year began, the widow of the dead officer demanded the removal of her husband's name from the enterprise, because she believed the school was mishandling some of its grant money. Or when Elizabeth heard about the rats in the hallways. Or when

Dernard's new teacher—the third of the year—started telling the ten-year-olds unsettling tales from his previous job as a corrections officer at the D.C. jail. But at the public elementary school in her neighborhood, Shadd, sixty-one per cent of students were unable to read—the worst test scores in the city. So it wasn't until the academic year was almost over that Elizabeth gave up, deciding that staying at home for the few remaining days of class was better for Dernard than going to the charter school she had carefully chosen for him.

I went with Elizabeth to pick up his books. In his classroom, ten boys in khakis and maroon polo shirts sat quietly at empty desks. No books, no paper, not even an objective on the blackboard. They stared into space as the teacher sat at his desk doing the same. Elizabeth grabbed Dernard's books, jumped in her Suzuki, and drove maniacally, the air thick with her undetonated anger. "It's like people think that in this part of town we settle for anything," she said.

"I learned," Dernard said later, trying to make her feel better. "I just learned what I learned already."

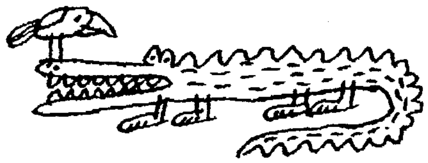
Elizabeth did not feel better. She hated the thought of returning Dernard to the public school she had traded in for the charter, and where, she feared, he had been labelled a troublemaker after his fight. "Like, you know, this other child was having problems in math?" she told me. "An administrator was, like, 'Why? All little black boys know how to count money.' I mean, she already got the boy selling drugs. And, you know, for real I think some of them teachers already got the boy six feet in the ground."

Elizabeth tore through the Shrimp Boat until her fury was contained. Then she pulled to a curb, inhaled, and opened a spelling book that her brainy son had been using that year. Holding it out as if it had landed on her from a great distance, she began to read the words aloud: " 'Look.' 'Took.' 'Good.' 'Stood.' " Dernard. Her reader.

A few feet from where we sat, teenage boys strolled past, wearing the coolie hats that were that moment's high fashion. Shortly after, smoke rose around younger children playing double Dutch on the sidewalk. Someone had set the project's parched hedges on fire. A hook-and-ladder came, along with three police cruisers. Someone spoke of the burning bush and Moses. Elizabeth remained fixed on the paperback speller: "Look," "Took"—evidence of a quieter crime.

In the Shrimp Boat, it is possible to see welfare reform as a Ponzi scheme whose currency is children. You put your children in day care so that you can work, but the only work you may be qualified for, after years of being a full-time mother, is in a day-care center. There you take care of the children of other poor women, many of whom now spend their days working at other day-care centers. This child-swapping has a levelling effect. The children of incompetent parents may receive the nurturing of more conscientious parents, while the children of parents like Elizabeth can expect to be tended by less competent parents. This phenomenon, familiar to the middle class, is particularly unsettling in the Shrimp Boat, where you notice that the operator of a neighborhood crack house, whose own five children were removed by child-protection services, has, thanks to welfare reform, become a caregiver at a Benning Road recreation center. Despite a doubling of federal day-care subsidies, many mothers here make the calculation that Elizabeth made when her children were six, seven, and nine, and her day-care reimbursements stopped. They note the mentholated-cigarette smoke in the infant room and the felonry who are monitoring the playground, and decide that the best way to protect their children is to keep them home, teach them how to make grilled-cheese sandwiches, dial 911, and operate the dead bolts on the door.

Therefore Elizabeth was particularly relieved when she found someone trustworthy in the community to look after her children: a slight, goateed mailman who coaches the after-school football team. For five months a year, at a quarter to six nightly, Dernard and a hundred and eighty-four other boys with pad-broadened shoulders spilled forth from Benning Terrace, East Capitol Dwellings, Arthur Capper, and neighborhoods across the Maryland line, and converged on a football field at an abandoned school which became, for two hours an evening, perhaps the District's safest hundred yards. Their volunteer coach, Andre (Jay) Ford, grew up in the Shrimp Boat and has delivered mail for seventeen of his thirty-four years. After walking his five-mile postal round, he comes to the field and coaches kids aged eight to fourteen.



In fact, Andre prefers chess—he can riff for hours on the nineteenth-century master Paul Morphy, whose moves seemed mathematically impossible until he easily defeated his opponents. But, as Andre knows from his Shrimp Boat childhood, football offers a more credible cover for kids who want to grow up to be something other than hardheads. Andre sees the game as a means, not an end, and that is why the least athletic kids on the team get playing time and the stars who skip mandatory tutoring sessions don't. It is also why his coaching points frequently address such athletic imperatives as whether a boy can go blind from masturbating.

A favorite word of Elizabeth's kids is "fake." Some of the fakery that the Shrimp Boat kids see around them is funny, such as how the kids of crackheads wear "I Love Jesus" bowrettes in their hair. Some of it isn't funny, such as how, at a local nonprofit organization, funds meant for computer training financed the living-room furniture of the executive director. (Another of the kids' favored words is "nonchalant": when you get screwed, make like you don't care.) Andre Ford, Elizabeth's kids concur, is not fake, and when they are with him they drop their protective attitude of indifference. Last fall, the city sometimes forgot to mow the field the boys play on. Their fathers sometimes forgot to come to games. But six days a week, as armed drug dealers worked the dark slopes north of the field, occasionally descending to headhunt, the letter carrier materialized on the sidelines to yell "Knees up!" to hundreds of backward-running boys. For much of the season, the high beams of cars served as field lights, and some evenings they made a living palimpsest: the boys' shadows eclipsing and then revealing the foul graffiti on the vacant school's façade.

Andre calls his players the Bison, for the once endangered species that has been nurtured back to health. He grew up with Dernard's father, a smart kid who was an addict by the age of twenty. Dernard, whom Andre calls the Philosopher, was so joyful that he could barely speak the day he realized that the coach knew his name.

"One-fourth of one person in this program will even have a chance at an N.F.L. tryout," Andre tells his kids, "though five might get a scholarship to college." Still, the average Bison believes he will get out of the ghetto by going pro. This belief is fomented by a few of the assistant coaches—recovering addicts and blue-collar jobbers who were once youth-league superstars themselves. But when Elizabeth observed Andre's effect on Dernard she saw possibilities unrelated to athletic achievement. She saw a chance to engage her remote older son.

"Would it be possible to speak with the personality that pays the bills?"

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For as long as I have known Wayne, his bright brother and sister have spoken on his behalf, reflexively translating his needs. For as long as I've known Elizabeth, she has been battling someone or another over Wayne's intellectual and emotional potential. When he was younger and smaller, she had to guess his feelings from his posture, because he didn't smile and seldom spoke. As soon as he was old enough to hold a pencil, he created art—from toy-box assemblages to intricate drawings, which he would throw away as soon as they were finished. He drew, in perfect perspective, terraced cityscapes with steel-and-glass schools and filigreed steeples. He drew vast extended families headed by calm-faced fathers. "He always makes stuff that is," Dernard explains. "Only, he makes it better than it is."

Wayne never had a proper art teacher, but Elizabeth, even at her poorest, kept him in sketch pads. "It's like toilet paper—you just have to have it in the house," she once explained. "He's not himself when he runs out of paper."

Wayne's first teachers said he was fine. Elizabeth remembers the day she stopped believing that. She had been volunteering in his second-grade class and looked over his shoulder during a spelling quiz. "He had numbered his paper," she said, "and all the numbers were backward. His name, what he could write of it, was backward, too. And I just started to cry."

When school officials delayed testing him for special education, Elizabeth worked the Shrimp Boat grapevine; eventually, a Metrobus driver directed her to a nonprofit agency that would assess Wayne for free. He was diagnosed as dyslexic, and spent the next three years in the Shrimp Boat elementary school's lone special-ed classroom, where he was regularly punished for stealing small objects for use in his toy box. "They treated him like a germ," Elizabeth said. "I felt if I couldn't get him out of there he would end up in a group home." But it wasn't until fifth grade that she got an attorney who, pro bono, pushed the school system to review Wayne's case. Psychologists concluded that he had pervasive developmental disorders and probably Asperger's syndrome, which is marked by an inability to make social and emotional connections, and that the District of Columbia's special-ed programs weren't meeting his needs. He was first placed in a "non-degree" special-education academy—a school for children with no capacity to fulfill the requirements for high-school graduation. Elizabeth pushed again, harder. Now, every weekday morning, Wayne takes a bus to a small private high school for disabled children in a Maryland suburb, where his tuition is covered by the D.C. school system, the classes have only six students, and his art work hangs in the hallway.

Wayne began the year by raiding a teacher's handbag, then improved his reading to the third-grade level. "Perceives himself as rejected by others," his current psychological assessment says. "Harbors strong feelings of inadequacy." I read the assessment in a classroom one day while Wayne and an overweight white girl teased each other gently in the hall. He has learned to speak with less fear among his learning-disabled classmates, who are fascinated by the intense, artistic boy from the ghetto. He has never had a friend in the Shrimp Boat, and that is why Elizabeth turned to Andre.

Andre told Elizabeth that Wayne, who weighs a hundred and fifty-two pounds, would have to scrimmage in the top weight class, with the biggest, roughest kids. Both Wayne and Elizabeth worried that those kids would hurt him. The boys themselves worried that Wayne, whom they considered a "retard," would slow them down. Some of them had been playing for Andre since they were eight, and after so many years together they were ready to get good, let fly. Wayne, as far as anyone knew, had never touched a football. But as Andre enforced rules of civility to safeguard Wayne, and as Drenika the cheerleader levelled transgressors with a highly articulate stare, Wayne mastered the playbook and learned to track the ball down the field.

When Wayne is talking to a patient listener, he is increasingly able to keep up his end of a conversation—a conversation that will tend to be more interesting than those one typically has with thirteen-year-olds in the Shrimp Boat. These talks will be filled with questions that Wayne has suppressed for years. ("What are the schools with the furniture outside on Saturday?" he asked one day, trying to solve the riddle of an urban flea market.) But, in a neighborhood with a shortage of such listeners, Wayne's shame about his differences has increased along with his abilities. At football practice, trying to identify the algorithms of ordinary teen-age life (for instance, how to convey interest in the cheerleader who also plays the violin without being ridiculed by his peers), he was finding that he would rather be mocked outright than be patronized by praise he knew he hadn't earned. Once, in Wayne's presence, Dernard gamely asserted that Wayne was now one of the best Bison players. Wayne yelped as if he'd been kicked, "Don't say that! It isn't true." It wasn't. But Elizabeth's son had willed his way from team joke to second-string lineman who was the first to arrive at practice.

As the season progressed, one of Andre's former players, a young man named SeQuan, was murdered on a Shrimp Boat corner—ten shots and nine bystanders who managed to see nothing. A wide receiver's mother was nearly strangled by her boyfriend on the practice field. A thirteen-year-old defensive tackle whose mother was missing and whose father is dead was found to be raising himself, his guardian grandpa having grown senile. And the Bison won game after game.

In the third quarter of a late-season game against Woodland Terrace, with the Bison up by six, the quarterback called a play and Wayne double-checked with his teammates the jersey number of the player he was going to block. The other Bison fell silent, then started to clap. It was the first time they had heard him speak.

Dernard earned an A-plus at his new public school for a writing assignment on his favorite things: "Jordans, Garnetts, Pippens, Paytons, Flights, Timberlands, and Flight Posites." Emboldened, he bore down one November afternoon on "The Mouse and the Motorcycle," by Beverly Cleary. It's a book about a boy who befriends a mouse while living in a luxury hotel, and Dernard was somehow able to wrap his imagination around room service and croquet mallets and antimacassars on overstuffed armchairs. What he couldn't get was why anyone would want a mouse in his room. "Like it was infested?" Then he considered his own lack of companionship. If a boy was sufficiently lonely, he concluded, a mouse would be acceptable to talk to.

Later that rainy night, Elizabeth, sufficiently lonely, called me: "Michael and me, it's over." She was thirty-one and a mother of three, and Michael was the only man she had ever been on a date with—"to the movies, a walk in the park, you know." For five years, he had been her on-and-off boyfriend and her all-time hope for marriage, a permanent means of easing her children's loneliness, as opposed to the short-term Coach Andre solution. "I don't have time in the day to start all over," she said, sighing.

The men who fathered Wayne, Dernard, and Drenika live close to the Shrimp Boat and claim vast regions of the children's psychic maps. But they are all, practically speaking, absentee, with the intervals between their visits often measured in years. Welfare reform has spawned tough new laws to help mothers extract child support from such fathers, and with renewed hope Elizabeth has appeared in court ten times over the past eight months to try to secure from the three men the combined total of a hundred and ninety dollars a month they've been ordered to pay. So far, she has collected nothing, which is basically what she has collected for the last thirteen years. Only thirteen per cent of the city's female-headed households receive alimony or child support, according to D.C. government figures.

Wayne's father was an older guy who picked Elizabeth up after junior high

SHOWCASE *In their book "No Ordinar*
man's effect on such exotic landscapes as Icelan

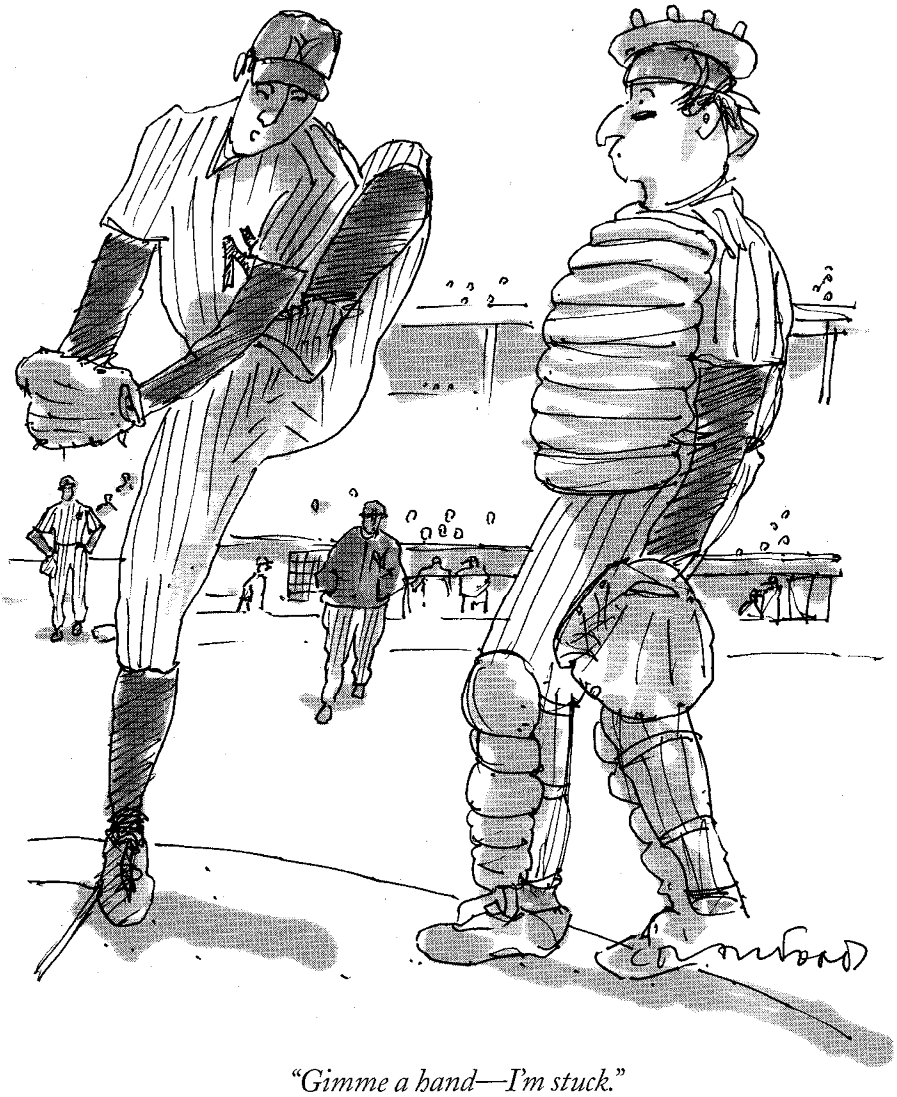
LAURENCE MILLER GALLERY

Land: Encounters in a Changing Environment," the collaborative photographers Virginia Beahan and Laura McPhee documented and Sri Lanka. In Orondo, Washington, closer to home, Fuji apples hang wrapped in paper—nature protected from nature.

had let out for the day. Drenika's father, a crack user, faded from the picture soon after the New Year's Eve on which the baby was conceived. Elizabeth was twenty-one when she left Dernard's father, who had stayed in her life just long enough after her son was born to earn a conviction for assaulting her. Bruised and battered, she looked at her three babies in diapers and found a doctor willing to tie the tubes of a twenty-one-year-old. She gave up on men for five years. "I felt so deep in this hole I didn't want to be in," she said. She took self-esteem classes, then two courses in parenting skills; she focussed on life beyond her living-room couch. And then she met Michael, who seemed compatibly committed to self-improvement. At that time, she was trying to get work experience by volunteering at a community-development agency. He passed her desk daily on his way to Narcotics Anonymous. He was two years clean, went to church, worked maintenance. Unlike most of the men she met, he had never been to jail. One day, he appeared at her desk with a Hershey bar. "That was when I decided to recognize him," she said.

In the five years that Elizabeth had been seeing Michael, he had never given her his home-telephone number. "Still," Elizabeth said, "it was a step up from before." Indeed, if Michael hadn't helped with her children when she had to live for a month at the police academy, she probably wouldn't have made it through the course. Then again, he didn't show up for her academy graduation. When she wondered whether she could afford the house outside the projects, he said he'd help with the rent. He agreed to her idea that they attend a six-week marriage-prep course at the Free Gospel Church. But he never asked her to marry him.

"You know how you remember little things?" Elizabeth said. "I keep thinking about that day when I see at the Marlo Heights theatre there's a dollar movie, 'Air Bud 2'—it's about a dog—and kids get in free. I said, 'Hey, let's take the kids.' And he was just, 'I don't want to.' I mean, I didn't want to, either—nobody grown wants to see 'Air Bud 2.' But it's not for us—it's for the kids. That's being a family. You just go."



"Gimme a hand—I'm stuck."

Michael had also resumed his crack habit. One autumn night, as Elizabeth returned home from the funeral of a murdered law-enforcement colleague, Michael, who for weeks had been ignoring her attempts to page him, called to ask if he could come over. She said no. And there he was, banging on her doors and windows, and, as much as she hated the thought of putting her private life in play at work, she called the police. Now, in November, Michael wanted to reclaim the stuff he had contributed over the years to her household: the shelves that hold her kids' school trophies; the framed print in the living room of an interlocking African man, woman, and child.

The idea of marriage is relatively new in the Shrimp Boat, where for decades even love was something a woman lied about to caseworkers and talkative children. The old welfare system targeted assistance to single parents, so a woman who married, or even cohabited, usually lost her benefits. The 1996 reform law aimed to encourage two-parent families by removing such economic disincentives, but there is little evidence thus far that it has had an effect, which does not surprise in the Shrimp Boat. Lately, the playlist at WKYS, "the people's station," is thick with odes to the newly self-sufficient woman. "All the honeys making moneys, / Throw your hands up at me," goes a Destiny's Child song that Elizabeth favors. To which the Cash Money Millionaires offer an emphatic male counterpose: "Give me a project chick. / Give me a hoodrat bitch, / One that don't give a fuck."

Elizabeth said, "I know how a typical family is supposed to be—man, woman, children, the man first. But I've been raising kids by myself for thirteen years. It's hard to take off the in-charge hat and put on the submissive-woman hat. There were things I should have done different—" She stopped herself. Heartbreak is a luxury. Last year about this time, her partner at work, a guy who believed in her potential and taught her most of what she knows about being a cop, killed himself over love trouble. Elizabeth sank into depression. "I can't go there," she said now. "I can't hover over it and say, 'Oh, I'm so sad.' "

One afternoon, between a security gig at a McDonald's and a trip to the football field to watch her children practice before she headed to roll call at the station, Elizabeth went online and was instant-messaged by a police officer in Texas. He had read her profile on A.O.L. and was "quite interested in getting to know you."

She had to laugh. Her kids want a father, yesterday. Michael had placed himself in rehab, but her bride-of-Michael fantasies were finished. With her schedule, where but in cyberspace could she unearth a husband?

"Whazzup with U?" she tapped back. Ghetto giveaway. From the other end, silence.

A cold front was coming to the Shrimp Boat. A bullet hit the window of a seventy-five-year-old neighbor of Cookie's as she was sitting down to Thanksgiving dinner; outside, a twenty-year-old was dead and three others had been shot in a drive-by. Three health inspectors testing a creek at the project's edge explained to a fifteen-year-old the aquatic ecology of the inner city, after which the boy robbed two of them at gunpoint and raped the other. Cops grumbled about a new annoyance on the streets: teen-agers who choose not to participate in that rite of passage known as getting a driver's license until they're pulled over and sent to chill in the Benning Road lockup. I met a loquacious six-year-old, Anthony, standing sentry over his father's van, which someone had broken into, leaving behind the bladeless shaft of a knife. "That's where they raped the girl and then they took an eraser and erased all the blood," he explained. We talked at length about his aims for his first-grade year, which hadn't begun because his mother had forgotten to enroll him, but when I happened upon him again, an hour later, he was stunned that I recalled our previous encounter. Elizabeth's kids, I was reminded, are the lucky ones.

Coach Andre, watching those lucky kids, was growing worried about Drenika. "It's tough for boys out here, but it's tougher for girls, and this girl is on fire," he said one day. "Here's a child, not even a teen-ager, who looks older than she is, who needs her mother to be there. And here's a mother who needs to work. And nowhere is the father. When you grow up in a house where your dad is buying you stuff and telling you he loves you, you don't fall for the okeydoke that comes from other guys. But when you don't get attention from males at home, some guy'll say, 'Damn, you got a nice one,' and that'll sound so good. You begin to peel a little more off, wear the booty shorts, get a little more attention. And sad as it is, and try as Cookie does, Drenika is getting out there. She's being fattened up for the kill."

One night at eight, not long after Drenika's twelfth birthday, Elizabeth called from work to learn that her daughter hadn't come home from school. Elizabeth fled the station, panicked, recalling her own sexual initiation at age thirteen: the walk home from school, the two men on PCP, the fist to the mouth, the chill of the laundry-room floor. Elizabeth pounded on the doors of Drenika's friends—Stevie Wonders, all. She drove up and down the Shrimp Boat's streets. As eleven o'clock approached, she turned onto B Street and found her daughter leaning up against a wall with Rico.

Elizabeth put Drenika on total after-school lockdown: "You get enough air to breathe, but the rest belongs to me." Then she marched to Rico's house, where she encountered a boy far less tough than she expected—a kid whose own mother worked, a kid somewhat disoriented by the raft of girls at his disposal. "It's like I just don't know how to say no," he told her. She felt a frisson of sympathy, and then she scared him within an inch of his life. "You go on and be a player, but you make sure it's not gonna be with Drenika," she told him. "Or when you next see me walking toward you, you had better raise up and run."

She persuaded her superiors to give her the 11:30 P.M.-to-6:30 A.M. shift, which is already overpeopled with single mothers trading sleep and safety for evenings with their children. After a brief reprieve, though, she was returned to 7:30 P.M.-to-4 A.M. duty. She got her first gray hair and didn't pluck it—"This one's yours," she told Drenika. And she went to bed many mornings second-guessing her choices. If she keeps working, will she look back on these years and find she made a minimal living by mortgaging the future of her daughter?

And what about Wayne, whose mind is on fire—whose presumptive slowness now seems more like Edwardian reserve? He wants to learn about the Kennedy Center, the Capitol. He wants a mentor to "teach me the stuff about being a man." He does not want to hear that there are waiting lists for mentors at the programs Elizabeth has called. He has been waiting too long already. And then there's Dernard, smart Dernard, who the coaches say is so starved for attention he's been picking fights at practice, and who sometimes climbs into Cookie's bed on her days off, as he did when he was four. "Is there a pill to stay little?" he asked one day. " 'Cause if there was, I'd eat the whole pack."

One morning, it occurred to Cookie that she had ten years of raising teen-agers ahead of her.

The standard reward for academic achievement in the ghetto is a chrome-plated trophy. It is athletic achievement—even peewee athletic achievement—that reaps the windfall, and in November the Bison won the D.C. midget-football championship. Then they went to Baltimore, where they just managed a victory in the tri-state, and where the defeated team's fans slashed their tires. On to Pennsylvania, where they beat an East Brunswick, New Jersey, powerhouse in the regionals. Thereupon a fantasy about which Shrimp Boat kids speechify at Junior Toastmasters and confide in their journals suddenly became real: the Bison had earned a December trip to Orlando, Florida—the place where, as Dernard put it, the oranges grow up—to compete in the national youth-football championships at Disney World.

This was, from a parental perspective, problematic, as the Bison had no money to get to Orlando. But Cookie and the coaches put the screws on the Shrimp Boat, and a retired cop, a government-worker uncle, a shoe store, and a community-development organization came through with enough for a bus ride: thirty-six kids, fourteen hours, four cans of Arm & Hammer air freshener. On the first half of the journey, cheerleader Drenika rued the loss of Rico, who, after meeting Cookie, had decided to focus his charms on another seventh-grade girl. On the second half, she began a romance with another boy named Rico, a six-foot-tall guard. Dernard, the water boy, absorbed the information slipping past his window on the first overnight trip of his life. "I never been nowhere but maybe to Virginia once," he said, "so I gotta see everything there is." Elizabeth, team chaperon, was so happy for Wayne that she forgot to fret that the loss of income from her part-time job would mean a lean Christmas. And Wayne himself studied a line drawing materializing in his sketchbook: a minutely realized modern high school encircled by a low boxwood hedge.

Upon arrival in Orlando, Drenika got sunglasses that were dappled like the 102nd Dalmatian. She pushed them up on her forehead and squinted: Christmas lights snaking up the trunks of palm trees, topiary shaped like mouse ears. "We ain't playing now," she said. "This be Disney World for real."

On the Disney playing fields, the Bison promptly provided a return on the Shrimp Boat's investment, crushing a North Carolina team in the quarterfinals, 33–6. In the semifinals, they beat a suburban Illinois squad whose tradition has been celebrated by Wheaties. That put them in the Pop Warner Super Bowl, the ne plus ultra of peewee football. There Andre Ford's team would meet a Miami juggernaut that was undefeated for the last two seasons and had a Web site unofficially sponsored by a law firm.

After sessions on the practice field, the Bison slept four to six to a motel room while Andre lay awake in his room, mentally totting up receipts. Other teams carbo-loaded at Western Sizzlin; the Bison woke up to Fruity Pebbles that Elizabeth bought in bulk at the Orlando Wal-Mart. But even the hardest-faced Bison found themselves grinning. Prep-school and college scouts had gathered; ESPN was filming. The Shrimp Boat kids had come to Disney, where bubble gum has been outlawed for its crimes against clean sidewalks, to have their existence widely acknowledged. Don't say *if* we win, they told me. Say *when* we win.

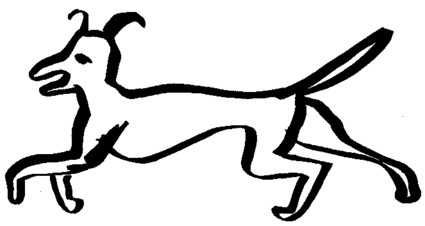
The night before the Super Bowl, the league held a pregame party for the country's best junior football players and cheerleaders. On the way to the event, the Bison visited a gift shop, where, when they entered, every other customer exited and every clerk and manager closed in. It was unclear whether this reaction was a response to their size, their do-rags, the rubber boa constrictors around their necks, or just their jerseys, which, in the absence of laundry funds, were ripe from the playoff games.

The Bison walked into the party acutely aware of their own smell. At the sight of them, their counterparts from the rest of America started to shriek with unbridled approval. "Follow them Bison boys!" they cheered. "D.C. knows how to party!" It was a momentary astonishment to the Bison that the kids of Tucson and Honolulu and Toms River covet their hard-core culture, or fetishize the store-bought version, anyway. Shrimp Boat music—Jay-Z, OutKast—blasted from the soundstage.

"It's like everybody want to be us," a Bison wide receiver named Joe said as a Louisville girl snapped his picture. But full contemplation of this phenomenon was deferred by an undulating mass of cheerleader tweens. Assessing the situation, Wayne asked me for an Altoid.

"Every time you wobble wobble it gets me horny / So I can ride that ass from the night until in the morning. . . ." As Cookie and I danced on a trembling picnic table, we could look down through the manufactured smoke on Shrimp Boat kids getting loved up by girls in spaghetti straps, orthodontics, and glitter-smeared cheeks. Jealous athletes from other teams raised voices and fists. At home, the Bison would not have let such disrespect go unaddressed. But at Disney they kept dancing.

The smoke made everyone look younger, and nothing that happened that night seemed to suggest that the game was rigged against the ghetto kids' future. I thought about what Ralph Ellison called the unexpectedness of the American experience—great achievements that emerge from conditions of profound implausibility. One of the dancing Bison, a thirteen-year-old named Michael Howard, had earlier that evening told me a secret. He'd read a story called "The Tell-Tale Heart." It made no sense, but he couldn't shake all that pounding under the floorboards. So he read it again, and this time broke through the clots of language. Clear as day: the pounding was the guy's own conscience. Michael had felt his mind at work, and liked it.



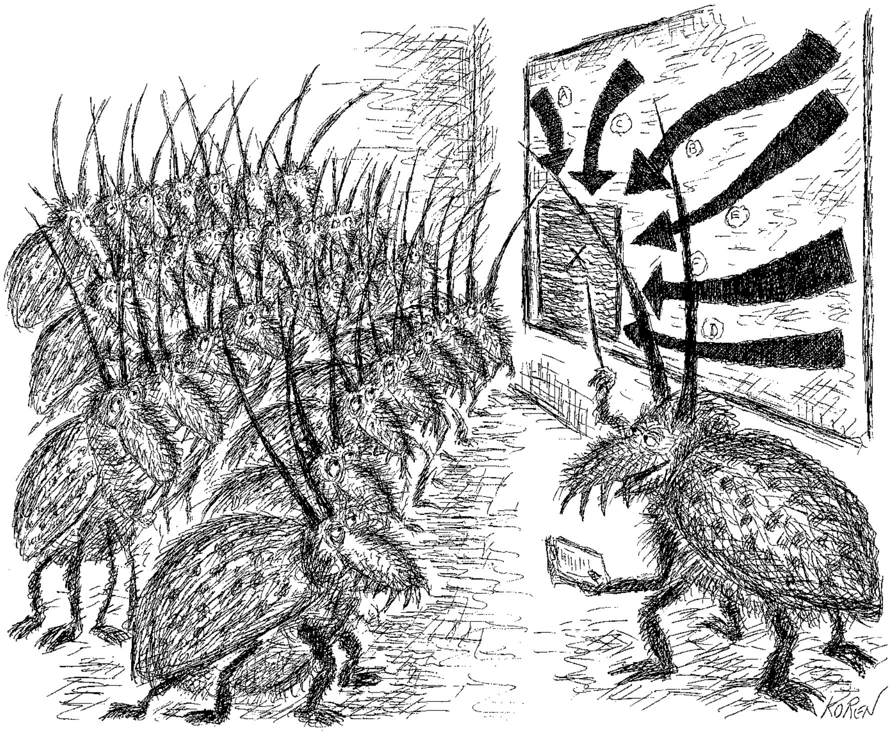
Observing the mingled limbs and sympathies of the youth cultures of Shrimp Boat and suburbia, I imagined that all these children were, in the end, more alike than not—that violence and parental absence and low expectations do only superficial damage; that Shrimp Boat kids might prove competitive in the post-welfare meritocracy by dint of sheer desire. By the time the d.j. veered into "Y.M.C.A.," I was deep in the pudding of Shrimp Boat/football-coach/Disney-ad affirmation. Not *if* we win, *when* we win. What you believe you can achieve.

Andre reined in the Bison early for a good night's sleep before the game. As Dernard walked out of the theme park, his face tightened and he grabbed my hand. A small red pool was spreading across the sidewalk. Melted Popsicle, I offered. He crouched, dipped a finger, resumed breathing.

The next morning, after the N.F.L. film crew miked up the Bison center, Wayne marched proudly onto the playing field in a column of chanting, grunting boys. Four-foot-ten Dernard shouldered an equipment bag as large as he was. Drenika and the other cheerleaders, wearing T-shirts under their sleeveless uniforms in the name of modesty, sang at the top of their lungs, "So good to be a Biiii-son . . ."

The Shrimp Boat kids knelt, held hands, and dedicated the game to God. Then they went out and got obliterated. At the half it was 40–6. Wayne, his arm bloodied, hopelessly chased a Miami back with world-class speed and Division I coaches already plotting his future. The Bison's best back, a boy named Speedy, who wore the T-shirt of his murdered cousin beneath his jersey, sobbed until he hyperventilated. Elizabeth, on the sidelines, struggled not to follow suit. "We ain't got this far for nothing," pleaded tackle Curtis Lynch, trying to rally his teammates as eye black streamed down his own cheeks. "We got here. It must mean something." The assertion came out as a question. In the third quarter, Pop Warner mercy rules kicked in, and the referees ran out the clock.

The Bison had thought positive, tried their best, but were not good enough. Afterward, Andre told them so. "You know what champions do?" he said. "Champions get better." The boys, stripped shirtless, seemed smaller now, and the saddest among them mourned more than the loss of one game. Most had played under Andre for the last time. Today, the children aged out into a harsher world. They packed their dirty gear into garbage bags. They loaded the bus and left the Magic Kingdom for the Shrimp Boat, bits of girl glitter still shimmering on their skin.



"Today's objective is the genetically modified corn in this quadrant."

Sometimes Cookie thinks about what her life would be like if she hadn't left welfare. This speculation requires a tolerance for ambiguity. She wouldn't have had the clarity and confidence she has now about what she wants for her children—to finish high school without having children and to go to college—but she might have had more time to help them reach those goals. She would have been a better day-to-day mom but a lousier role model, particularly for Drenika. "Still," she said one day, "it's too hard not to think sometimes about a life where I could have real time with Wayne, to read and really help him with things. You can't just schedule him in for half an hour in between jobs, the way I have to do now—he just doesn't work that way. There'd be time to help them all with homework, answer Dernard's million and two questions, do family things—like make a meal together, me and Drenika, instead of calling her in for a catch-up conversation when I'm taking a shower. I could take them to church more—we totally just don't go anymore, with my schedule, but that's no excuse, not really. We could communicate. We could be a family. I mean, I'm not saying we're not one now, but it could be like in a book."

Drenika was listening from the other end of the dining-room table. "A family like in a fairy tale?" she asked. For a moment, she sounded very young.

In January, during the Inauguration of George W. Bush, Officer Elizabeth Jones worked crowd control over demonstrators for twenty-four hours straight, most of those hours in icy rain. She spent the next four days in the hospital with a hundred-and-four-degree fever and chest pains, after which she resumed her two jobs and started a remedial-math class, in order to better help her kids with their homework.

Drenika, who failed geography in the first half of seventh grade, was, at the start of the second half, thrown to the floor at school by a boy who had previously run over the assistant principal with a stolen car. She kept it to herself so as not to worry her mother, for whom she continued to run an efficient household.

Dernard, at home, discovered Harry Potter and invented an imaginary companion named DreSean. At school one day, shortly after failing art because a teacher misplaced the tepee he had built out of twigs, he was assigned to hide an old computer under a table as a teacher sprayed Lysol around the classroom. "They said the First Lady was going to pay a visit, and I guess the school didn't look so well," Dernard explained. The First Lady didn't come. Three weeks later, the school was scrubbed again. This time, President Bush himself arrived. As network-news crews filmed, he read the children a story about a poor black boy who loved learning and grew up to be a great leader.

"I'd say he was nice, almost like a regular man," Dernard said. "But why doesn't our school have to look right on all days and not just some days?"

Wayne continued to progress markedly in reading at his school, where his therapists are coming to believe that his gravest disability was being ostracized by his peers. The child once considered retarded is in fact bright, they say—a real striver—and will soon be ready for full-scale mainstreaming. This astonishing achievement will end Wayne's special-education funding and send him back to the public schools of the Shrimp Boat. At home, he started a diet, hoping to grow smaller and reclaim a position on Andre's team. He began as well to disassemble his toy box, in an effort to force himself further into the realer world outside his door. Then he realized he wasn't ready, not just yet. ♦

PROFILES

TOKYO STORY

Shintaro Ishihara's flamboyant nationalism appeals to many Japanese voters who are looking for a change in government.

BY JOHN NATHAN

In the fall of 1955, when Shintaro Ishihara was twenty-three and a senior at Hitotsubashi University, he dashed off a short novel, "Season of the Sun," about a group of college students from wealthy families who affect the speech and mannerisms of *yakuza* hoodlums. The boys express their defiance of postwar respectability by gambling and brawling and indulging in promiscuous sex. Ishihara had never written a novel before, but he was encouraged by the response to a short story that he had published in the college literary magazine. Sei Ito, a distinguished novelist and critic and the Japanese translator of "Ulysses," praised the punchy style of the story and its vivid characterizations. Ishihara wrote "Season of the Sun" in three days. It won the Akutagawa Prize, then, as now, the gateway to a career as a serious writer in Japan, and sold two hundred and seventy-five thousand copies the first year it was in print. A film version was released in May, 1956, with Ishihara and his younger brother, Yujiro, in minor roles. The film's violence and explicit sex thrilled young audiences. (In the most famous scene in the novel and the film, the protagonist, a college boxer, thrusts his penis through a *shoji* screen into a room where his girlfriend is waiting for him.) A sequel, "Crazed Fruit," which was released three months later, made Yujiro a movie star. Between 1956 and 1961, the Ishihara brothers collaborated on a dozen films that were adapted by Shintaro from his best-selling novels and starred Yujiro as a menacing anti-hero.

The Ishiharas were a handsome pair, with regular features and perfect teeth and glittering, insolent eyes. The teenagers who idolized them, the Sun Tribe, dressed in Hawaiian shirts and baggy pants and two-tone shoes in emulation of Yujiro. They wore their hair long on top and clipped on the sides in a style that was advertised in barbershop windows as the Shintaro cut. "Outside Tokyo, Japan was incredibly provincial in those days," Ishihara said to me recently. "Most kids had never seen yachts or waterskiing or motorcycles, and they had certainly never carried on with girls the way we did. We bought fabric in bright colors and patterns and had one of Yujiro's girlfriends sew it into shirts—they knocked everybody out. Yujiro came back from Honolulu wearing a bracelet, and that created another fad. I was amazed."

By 1960, PTA members and newly formed women's groups had successfully lobbied against the Sun films as a pernicious influence on young people, and the series ended. Yujiro starred in fifty other movies and recorded more than a hundred hit records. Shintaro Ishihara wrote prolifically—plays and novels and even a musical version of "Treasure Island." He tried his hand at directing ("If I had gone on," he says, "I could have been better than Kurosawa"); ran a theatre company; travelled to the North Pole; raced his yacht, the Contessa; crossed South America on a motorcycle and then turned his memoir of the journey into a best-selling book. In 1968, he decided to go into politics, and was elected to the Upper House of the Diet with three million votes, the largest number a candidate had ever received.

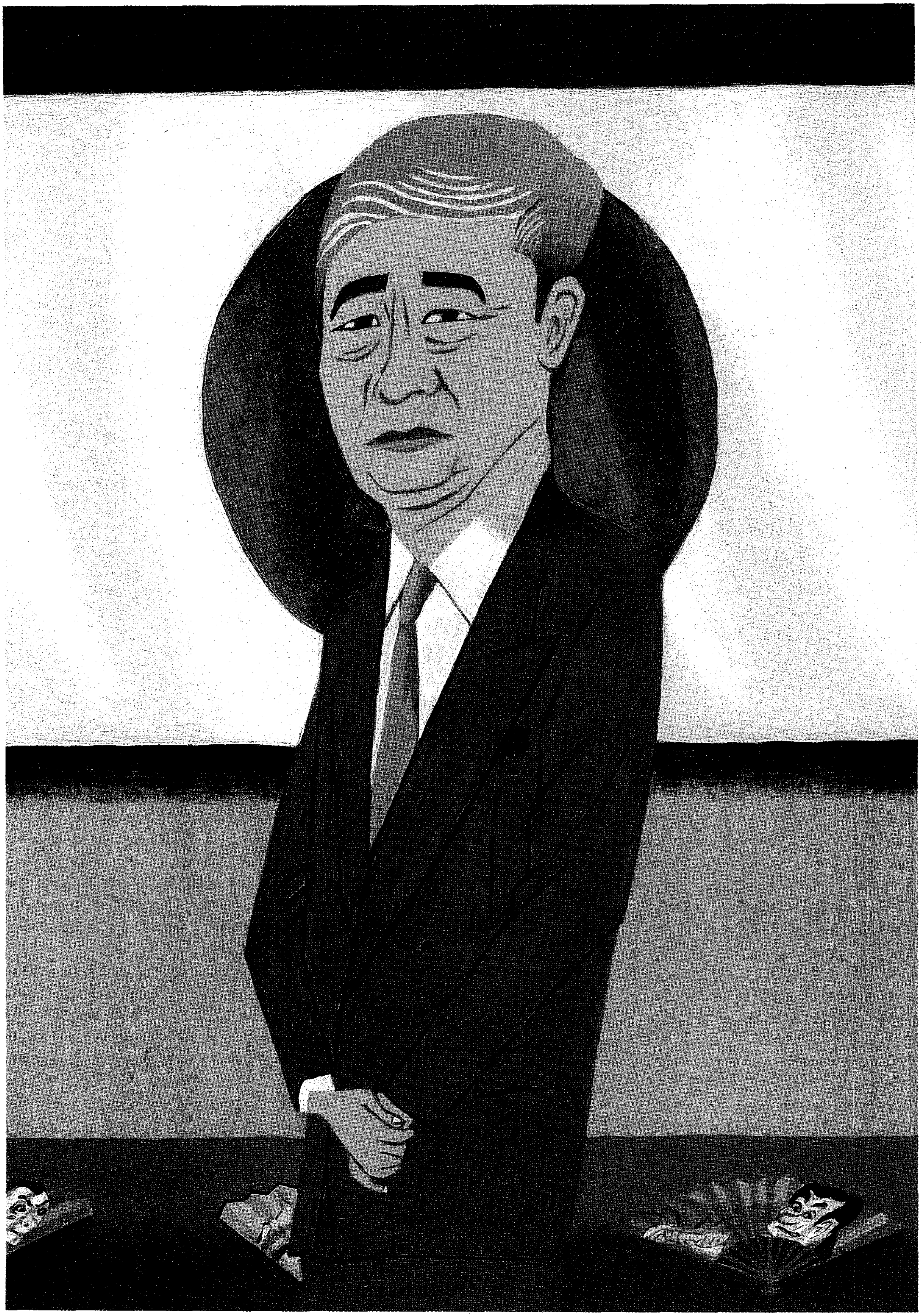
Four years later, running as a conservative member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the L.D.P., from Tokyo's affluent Second District, Ishihara was elected to the more powerful Lower House, and served eight successive terms. He was Minister of Transportation in the cabinet of Noboru Takeshita in 1988, and the following year, when Takeshita resigned in the wake of a scandal involving bribes to top officials, Ishihara was defeated in a bid to become president of the L.D.P., a position tantamount to being named Prime Minister. He left the Diet in 1995 and returned briefly to novels. "I wrote a good book," he says, "about a motorcycle stunt rider who was a reincarnation of Yukio Mishima. I proved to myself that my sword wasn't rusty." Ishihara came out of political retirement in 1999, but he didn't return to the L.D.P. Running as an independent, he was elected governor of Tokyo (unlike other cities in Japan, which are led by *shicho*, or mayors, Tokyo, the largest city in the world, has a governor, a *chiji*).

Ishihara is a national hero and for many Japanese an appealing alternative to the party hacks who led the government throughout the nineties, while the economy collapsed and scandals involving fraud, bribery, and collusion among government ministers and *yakuza* bosses toppled one cabinet after another. The current Prime Minister, Yoshiro Mori, a taciturn former rugby player who took office a year ago, is no more capable of dealing with Japan's crisis than his predecessors. Mori has been asked to resign by L.D.P. leaders, who want him out of the way before July, when elections for the Upper House will be held. But the Party is almost certain to lose those elections no matter who Mori's successor is, and, if so, a confidence vote in the Lower House could be held as soon as this fall, which would lead to yet another Prime Minister. Ishihara is not officially in the running for any national office at the moment, but he is regularly rated the most effective leader in Japan, and when voters are polled about who they would like to see as Prime Minister, he gets high marks.

The Governor has a suite of offices on the seventh floor of the gargantuan Tokyo City Hall, a forty-five-story twin tower designed in 1987 by Kenzo Tange. The modest desk in Ishihara's private office holds jars of pens and pencils, a mir-

MARK ULRIKSEN

"I'm a patriot," says Ishihara, who became governor of Tokyo in 1999. "But the Japanese word, aikokusha, has fascist overtones."



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ror and comb and several Japanese fans, and a clunky word processor that he uses to write his speeches and his weekly column, "Wake Up, Japan!," for the conservative newspaper *Sankei*. "I can't write fiction here," he said to me. "I have to do that at home." A pair of slippers, a set of barbells, and a baseball bat were under the desk. The bat is part of an exercise game that involves a specially designed ball and a net. It comes from the U.S., "like surfboards and Windsurfers and hula hoops," Ishihara said. "Only you Americans can come up with this kind of dynamic stuff." A Japanese flag, red sun on a white field, was on a stand behind the desk. It is not unusual now, but the flag was an issue when Ishihara took office, and there were those who objected to his displaying it. Four months after he was elected, the Diet passed bills that made Japan's flag and its national anthem, "Kimigayo," a hymn to the Emperor, the legal symbols of the nation for the first time since the defeat in 1945.

A window two stories high in front of Ishihara's desk looks out at a waffle-iron pattern of smaller windows in the Keio Plaza Hotel across the street. The view is framed by marble columns. "It's like having your own private Mondrian," Ishihara remarked. The actual art in the office includes a Rauschenberg print inscribed to Ishihara, a drawing by Christo, and an oil painting by the Governor himself, a portrait of his brother in a glowing oval against a dark-blue background. The painting is titled, in Ishihara's scrawling hand, "Homage à Yujiro." When Yujiro Ishihara died of liver cancer, in 1987, more than thirty thousand people attended his funeral.

Ishihara is tall for a Japanese, six feet, and his broad, open face is weathered from years of sailing. When he speaks, his eyes shutter open and closed in a tic that furrows his brow as though he were in pain. His English is serviceable, but he preferred that we use Japanese.

"People imagine that artists and politicians are different species, and I've found the opposite to be true," he said. "If I had become a musician or a painter, I wouldn't be in politics. But writers and politicians both rely on words to express themselves—you know the Japanese expression 'the sword of rhetoric.' " He paused for emphasis. "However, the scary thing about this country is that our politicians don't have to say anything to succeed. When Noboru Takeshita was Prime Minister, his advice to me was 'lucid words, meaning unclear.' In this country, it's best to be mysterious; voters think that means there's something meaningful deeper down."

Ishihara has never been mysterious. He is an outspoken nationalist who rails against the United States and China and the central government. He claims that fifty years of subservience to the interests of the United States has deprived the Japanese of a national purpose and engendered a paralyzing identity crisis. And he reminds his countrymen that theirs is the only non-Caucasian society to have created a modern superpower. His enemies call him a demagogue and a racist, but his defiance resonates with the current mood of the country. Amending the constitution (which was imposed by General MacArthur during the U.S. occupation) to permit Japan to wage war in defense of its own interests was until recently a taboo subject. There are fierce debates about it now. And the government has proposed that the Prime Minister be allowed to pay his official respects to the more than two million soldiers who are buried in the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo, even though convicted war criminals from the Second World War are also interred there.

Ishihara told me that he decided to go into politics after visiting Vietnam to report on the Christmas truce for a Japanese newspaper in 1967. "I spent time with writers and intellectuals in Saigon, and I was flabbergasted by their indifference to the war," he said. "I felt certain that the country would fall to the Communists. When I got home, I came down with hepatitis, and I lay in bed for a month, thinking about Japan, and it began to seem clear to me that we were heading for Communism, too." I interrupted to ask what made him so afraid of Communism, and he gave me an answer that he had undoubtedly used before. "It takes away individuality and replaces it with uniformity," he said. "I'm an existentialist—freedom and passion are the most important things to me. I was horribly disappointed when I learned that Sartre was a Communist."

Ishihara's antipathy to Communism has not made him more sympathetic to the United States. He drew attention from Washington for the first time in 1989, when a collection of his speeches, "The Japan That Can Say No," appeared in English in a partial, unauthorized version translated by a department of the Pentagon. The collection also included speeches by Akio Morita, then the chairman of Sony. Although Morita's contribution was relatively bland—a rehashing of set pieces on the inequity and bias of U.S. trade policies toward Japan—he insisted that his portion of the text be deleted in a reprint of the

Japanese edition, which had sold more than a million copies, and in an authorized English translation published by Simon & Schuster in 1991.

The gist of Ishihara's argument was that American attitudes toward Japan were designed to subordinate Japanese interests and were, moreover, animated by racism. One of his points, which caught the attention of the Pentagon, was that Japan could tip the balance of power by selling the multi-megabit chips required by guided missiles to the Soviet Union instead of to the U.S.

I asked Ishihara about his purported xenophobia—was it true that he hated the United States? "I don't like America particularly, but I don't hate it, either," he said. And then he told me a story about the war. "I was in the seventh grade, and we were living in Zushi, on the coast," he recalled. "We were in the flight path of enemy aircraft heading out to sea. The warning bell would ring while we were in school, and we'd take off for home. The Americans could see that we were kids, but they'd strafe us anyway, for fun. If you made it to the woods near the beach, you were safe, but one day I got caught short and had to throw myself into a barley field. As I lay there, the Grummans and P-51s came roaring over me, flying low, and I could see that they had pictures of naked women and Mickey Mouse painted on the fuselage. I couldn't believe my eyes! I was scared to death, and I was angry; but I was also thinking what a place America must be, what a culture, and how different from Japan. Then I heard other planes but no machine guns this time; they were Zeros in pursuit, and their insignia was the Japanese flag. I felt like reaching up to embrace that rising sun."

We ate lunch in Ishihara's office—broiled eel on rice for me and a bowl of noodles for him, served on lacquer trays by two young women in stylish black dresses—and at ten minutes to one the Governor took off his shirt and tie and put on an exercise jacket with the Tokyo logo on the pocket. He was expected downstairs to lead union employees in midday calisthenics, but he said that I was welcome to stay in the office while he was gone. On his way out, he handed me a large book of pen-and-ink drawings titled "Fantasy Drawn by Shintaro Ishihara in His Teens." "There are some poems of mine in there, too," he said, "in French. Mishima-san had something pretty clever to say about them. He called them popular-song versions of Rimbaud."

The drawings were self-conscious imitations of Arp and Miró and Paul Klee, but with a certain fantastic humor of their own. Many were identified as self-portraits. In "Le Portrait de M. Ishihara Qui Est un Dadaist," for example, the artist represented himself as a figure that had come apart, a head with one skeletal arm attached by hinges and the other limbs akimbo and out of reach. It was as if Ishihara were expressing the disequilibrium he had experienced as a thirteen-year-old when Japan lost the war and the world turned on its ear.

Ishihara's father was an executive in a steamship company, and he grew up in harbor towns. He was born in Kobe on September 30, 1932, went to elementary school in the port city of Otaru, on the northern island of Hokkaido, and in 1942, when he was in the fifth grade, moved with his family to Zushi, thirty miles south of Tokyo and just east of Kamakura, the ancient capital. Zushi was, and remains, an affluent seaside resort; the Imperial family has a compound nearby, and a number of Ishihara's friends at Shonan Middle School were the sons of officers in the Imperial Navy and lived in the grander houses on the cliff above the ocean.

The 1945 defeat left its mark on the imagination of every postwar Japanese writer. For Yukio Mishima, it signified an end to the possibility of the heroic death in battle he had fantasized for himself. The novelist and Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe, ten years old at the time, heard the Emperor speaking in a radio broadcast in the voice of a mortal man and felt betrayed; Oe went on to become a leading spokesman for the Japanese New Left. Ishihara, three years older, had a similar reaction, but it would take him in the opposite political direction. "While we were at war, we were taught the glory of dying for the Emperor," he said. "The next thing I knew, it was all about remorse. Adults seemed shallow and hypocritical."

FLAT FIX
AIR
AUTO REPAIR

In 1948, Ishihara's father died, and to make ends meet his mother was obliged to sell property and heirlooms. The crisis was aggravated by Yujiro, who was running with a crowd of wealthy Zushi teen-agers and getting into trouble with the police. Ishihara hoped to become a painter, and had planned to study French literature at Kyoto University; instead, he took a year off after high school and remained at home to manage the family finances and look after his wayward younger brother.

In 1952, a family friend encouraged him to study business and offered to help pay his tuition. Informed that a C.P.A. could earn as much as twenty times the starting salary of a company man, he entered Hitotsubashi University in April, intending to major in accounting. He says that he felt out of place from the first day and stopped going to classes after six months. He had been a soccer star in high school, and he joined the soccer club, but the captain yelled at him for kicking the ball for a goal when he should have been assisting, and he quit the team.

In 1954, his junior year, a classmate persuaded him to help revive the college literary magazine, *Hitotsubashi Arts.* When it was time to publish the first issue, the editors had collected poetry and essays but no stories, so Ishihara produced his first work of fiction, "The Gray Classroom," a portrait of his brother and his delinquent friends. He wrote "Season of the Sun" the following year.

Japan was earnestly committed to the ideals of democracy and prosperity when "Season of the Sun" appeared, and Ishihara's cynicism was an affront to many readers. The young boxer protagonist and his dissolute friends are hedonistic and socially irresponsible, "well aware that virtue is insipid and boring." When the boxer sees his girlfriend on a date with a musician at a dance hall, he beats the man unconscious. "The important thing was that he did what he felt like doing the way he wanted to do it," the narrator reflects. "Why was never an issue. Since the only feelings that counted were satisfaction or the lack of it, he never had to reproach himself for having done something wrong. Committing a sin was an impossibility."

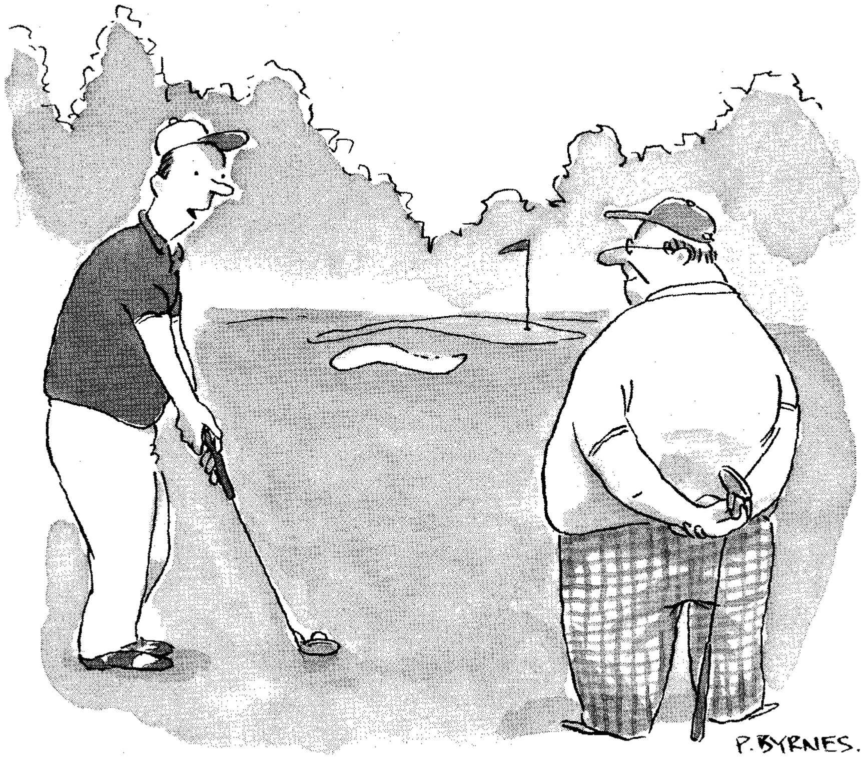
If Ishihara's fiction was against the grain of the times, so were the early post-war novels of Yukio Mishima. The perversity of their characters was similar, and Mishima, seven years older than Ishihara, was his ardent champion from early on. Mishima introduced Ishihara to the writers and playwrights and critics in the literary establishment. Ishihara was Mishima's guide to the sensual world. "Mishima-san had grown up in a family of bureaucrats," Ishihara said, "and underneath his pretensions he was conventional and inhibited. I introduced him to jazz singers and strippers and high-society parties, and I took him to night clubs and boxing matches, which he had never seen. In those days, respectable writers didn't watch boxing. It titillated Mishima, and he took it up himself. I remember going to watch him spar at the gym; he flailed around throwing jabs that never landed. When I asked him later why he didn't use a hook, he said he hadn't studied hooks yet. He was really something."

I was in Japan in the early sixties and, because I was translating one of Mishima's novels, "The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea," I saw a lot of Mishima and was a frequent guest at his famous parties, but I never met Ishihara there. "I hated that rococo house of his," Ishihara explained. "It was incredibly bourgeois, and there was something tacky about it, like being on a set. I always felt that Mishima-san had terrible taste."

Ishihara and Mishima's friendship had become strained by the late sixties, when Mishima began formulating his ultra-nationalism. Ishihara remembers a heated argument about the Shield Society, a paramilitary organization of young men in Mishima's thrall who had pledged their lives to the defense of the Emperor: "He invited me to a dress parade on the roof of the National Theatre. I said he should march his army in the streets if he was serious, where ordinary people could see them. And his answer was that people might throw eggs and splatter the uniforms he'd designed for them! I lost my temper. Where are your politics? I asked him. What about the constitution? Nuclear arms? He had no answers. I miss him. Japan's not the same since he's gone, but his politics were a joke."

Mishima's patriotism was aesthetic, a compound of romantic notions about loyalty, valor, and the beauty of martyrdom. It had little bearing on political reality. Ishihara's nationalism, which informs his politics today, is different, but perhaps not altogether different. There is something subjective and extravagantly metaphorical about his ideas. For instance, when he was asked recently to prescribe a cure for Japan's reliance on the United States, he replied with a literary conceit. "Since we respond only to pressure from the outside, let the North Koreans drop a missile on Kyoto and incinerate the Golden Pavilion again," he said. "That would open our eyes to the fact that the U.S. can't really protect us, and we could stop worshipping at that altar." The allusion was to "The Temple of the Golden Pavilion," the Mishima novel in which a young Buddhist monk burns down the Temple because it represents to him the essence of Japanese beauty and he feels compelled to destroy it to render it eternal. This has nothing to do with realpolitik.

When Ishihara decided to run for election to the Diet in 1968, Mishima warned him against mixing politics and art. Ishihara claims that Mishima had been seriously considering going into politics himself and was jealous. "He said that if I was driving along the coast on my way home from a political rally and there was a beautiful sunset, and I had my driver stop the car and got out to admire it, I would never be a real politician. I disagreed; I told him I intended to go on enjoying sunsets even if I became Prime Minister. He said, 'Just wait, you'll see.' " Ironically, it was Mishima who, two years later, became trapped in the ultimate confusion of art and politics. On November 25, 1970, shortly before his forty-sixth birthday, he paid a visit to the Ichigaya headquarters of the Ground Self-Defense Forces on the pretext of showing the commandant a rare Japanese sword. (The Self-Defense Forces, an army, navy, and air force posing as a sort of national guard, have been in place since 1954, in lieu of a formal military, which is prohibited by the constitution.) Mishima was accompanied by four cadets from the Shield Society. At a prearranged signal, they seized the commandant and held him at sword point while Mishima demanded through a barricaded door that the 32nd Regiment be assembled in the courtyard below. A few minutes past noon, he stepped onto the balcony and exhorted the soldiers to rise up with him in the name of the Emperor against a



"Researchers say I'm not happier for being richer, but do you know how much researchers make?"

postwar democracy that had deprived Japan of its army and its soul. He had intended to speak for thirty minutes, but his words were inaudible above the jeering. He went back to the commandant's office and committed hara-kiri. At his request, a cadet standing behind him beheaded him with the long sword.

Mishima's appeal was based on an impossibly elaborate, arcane vision of the Emperor as the sole source of the courtly elegance he considered to be the basis of Japanese identity. He cannot have believed that his words would inspire the regiment to insurrection. What he almost certainly was counting on was that the incident would allow him the warrior's death and martyrdom to the Imperial cause that had been a lifelong erotic fantasy. I asked Ishihara if he agreed that that was the case. "Mishima knew he was a fake, and he decided to get out before people realized they were looking at the Emperor's new clothes," he replied, obliquely. "But if he were here today I'd say, 'Let's plan more carefully this time and stage a coup d'état in earnest!' " He laughed, as though he were making a joke. "Until we get a proper military in this country, nobody is going to take us seriously."

Ishihara has been married for more than forty years to Noriko Ishida, the daughter of a retired officer in the Imperial Army. He has known her since he was a schoolboy. They have four sons. The eldest, Nobuteru, was born in 1957. Currently a member of the Lower House of the Diet, Nobuteru is associated with a group of Young Turks who were the first to call for the resignation of Prime Minister Mori last fall. Nobuteru is seen as his father's Trojan horse in the Diet, ready to rally support for him if he chooses to return to national politics. Ishihara's second son, Yoshizumi, is an actor; the third, Hirotaka, is an executive at a commercial bank; the youngest, Nobuhiro, is a painter. In February, Yoshizumi published a book consisting of entries from a diary that he has kept since childhood. If Yoshizumi's account is to be believed, the brothers chafed at their father's heavy hand in their lives. Their happiest times were spent at the home of Uncle Yujiro, where they were welcome to swim and play with an exuberance that was not allowed at home.

"We'd like you to take early retirement, retroactive to the day you started working here."

Hiroshi Takahashi, the president of Yusen Air and Sea Service, is Shintaro Ishihara's closest friend and confidant and has been his campaign manager throughout his political career. He has spent time in the West, two years in Düsseldorf and four in New York, and, like many businessmen of his generation, has chosen an English moniker to accommodate his foreign friends. He likes to be called Harry.

Harry has known Ishihara since 1952, when they were both freshmen at Hitotsubashi University. Harry was from the rural northern prefecture of Niigata, a fifth-level black belt in judo, and top dog in the dormitory where they both lived. "Ishihara was a young, handsome, naïve guy," Harry said to me in his colorful English. "I was a vulgar country boy and he was well-bred. He even asked, 'May I smoke?' I was astonished. He admired me because I was tough and he wanted to be tough; he adored Ernest Hemingway. But he was a very delicate, sensitive guy."

As evidence, Harry offers a story about a wildcat. Hitotsubashi was on the western outskirts of Tokyo in those days, in the middle of nowhere. A wildcat had finished off the dogs that lived in the surrounding woods and was brazenly raiding the campus for food. Harry and his friends bludgeoned it to death with a barbell and cut it up for sukiyaki. Ishihara came back that night to find them at table and demanded a plate of food. "We were always hungry," Harry recalled, "and he ate some and said, 'This is very greasy, what is it?' We told him, and held up the bloody hide. He cried like a girl and raced out and fell down in the hall and was vomiting. To be honest, he was just a mosquito guy."

In the spring of 1995, Ishihara came to Harry's office and announced that he was resigning from the L.D.P. and getting out of politics. "I was angry," Harry said. "I told him, 'You promised me thirty years ago that you would devote yourself to improving Japanese politics, and now you have lost your heart.' But there had been terrible scandals in the government, and he was disgusted. I understood how he felt. I was disgusted, too." For four years, Ishihara painted, wrote the novel about the motorcycle stunt rider, and cruised the Mediterranean with friends from his college days. "He was a totally free guy," Harry said. "He was even wealthier than before because he didn't have to maintain his staff. But he was gathering his feelings of frustration like magma."

Harry says that when Ishihara decided to run for governor of Tokyo in 1999, his wife asked Harry to talk him out of it. "I said to him, 'You will give up again and feel disappointed with yourself.'" But Ishihara was determined. The incumbent, Yukio Aoshima, was a vaudeville comedian whom voters had elected in a gesture of disgust with politicians (the city of Osaka had installed a comic as mayor at the same time). "He was a clown," Ishihara told me. "Scapin to the Prime Minister. And the city was headed for bankruptcy. Someone had to step in, and the job came with real power; it felt Presidential."

Ishihara's first move after he was elected had panache: he declined to live in the governor's official residence and persuaded the city to rent the property to an Italian food company for twenty-four thousand dollars a month. He said privately that the mansion was "unlivable, a bureaucrat's idea of good taste." Then he proposed taxing Tokyo's large banks, which had been in the red since the economy fell apart in 1990, on gross operating revenue instead of on profits. Notwithstanding a statute in the tax law that allowed local governments to levy certain kinds of taxes, the Ministry of Finance objected. (Ishihara referred to the Exchequer as "Washington's branch office in Tokyo.") Nevertheless, the Metropolitan Assembly nearly unanimously approved a three-per-cent levy, and it has generated a billion dollars a year.

The victory was perceived as more than financial. The public was angry at the central government for putting more than seventy million dollars into rescuing the banks from a catastrophe that they had helped create. Ishihara had not only demonstrated that politicians could tell bureaucrats what to do; he had raised the possibility that authority could be shifted to the local level. In May, 2000, Osaka legislated its own "Ishihara tax," and other city governments have been inspired to look for ways to claim a larger share of tax revenue for themselves.

Ishihara has a radical-capitalist approach to Japan's current economic "catastrophe." He says that the central government precipitated deflation by failing to understand that the dynamics of global finance hinge on the leverage of risk capital. The potential of Japan's superior manufacturing capabilities and vast wealth (individual holdings in cash, investments, and savings currently amount to more than eleven trillion dollars) has been dissipated in investments in public works that are badly managed by bureaucrats—he cites a new bullet train that no one wants or needs—and in financial institutions, including banks that are crippled by irrecoverable debt. "The first step to recovery," he says, "will be to release the taxpayers' hard-earned money from its evil spell and transform it into risk capital that can be used for direct investments in high-growth—and, to be sure, high-risk—businesses that need it now and can leverage it." To prime this "bold revolution" in monetary policy, Ishihara proposes the creation in the private sector of a "Japan revitalization fund." The goal would be to create a fund of $450 billion in the first year by pooling public money from pension funds and other sources, including individual savings. "If we can resolve to apply the strength we have effectively," he says, "there is no question that we will regain our position as an influential presence in the world."

Ishihara's most controversial positions have been taken on issues concerning Japan's relationship with the rest of the world, particularly China. "We pour money into China so they can continue work on developing a hydrogen bomb," he said to me. "It's no wonder they refer to Japan as 'soft earth.'" At a meeting with the Taiwanese President in Taipei, he referred to Taiwan as a "state." And more than once he has suggested that the Rape of Nanking in December, 1937, was a fabrication of the Chinese. Historians estimate that between two hundred thousand and three hundred thousand people were slaughtered by Japanese soldiers when the city fell. When I asked Ishihara about his revisionist statements, he looked at me reproachfully. "I said that the Chinese have exaggerated the numbers," he said. "In the hysteria of war, the Army did massacre people. That happens in war. The United States killed three hundred and fifty thousand people in Hiroshima in a single day." (Ishihara's numbers are often a little off. Nearly a hundred and twenty thousand peeople are estimated to have died in Hiroshima in the four days following the bombing. Many thousands died later from illnesses related to the explosion.)

Ishihara drew criticism last year when he called on the Self-Defense Forces to be prepared to help police maintain order if Chinese and Korean immigrants rioted in the aftermath of an earthquake. He used a derogatory term for immigrants, *sangokujin,* which translates as "the people of the three countries." It refers to communities that have always been treated badly. Before and during the war, several hundred thousand Koreans and Chinese were brought to Japan and forced to work as laborers. Three generations later, few are granted citizenship. In Tokyo's last big earthquake, in 1923, several thousand Koreans were murdered because of unfounded rumors that they had contributed to the chaos.

"I did mean what I said," Ishihara told me. "But, unfortunately, the media didn't report it correctly. I said 'illegal aliens from Taiwan and Korea,' and a reporter from Kyodo News Service filed a story that removed the 'illegal' part, and that's what the press picked up. The truth is, illegal Chinese and Korean aliens are responsible for the majority of the violent crime in this city today—maybe I shouldn't have said *sangokujin,* but I wanted a word with some teeth in it." Ishihara says that he threatened to sue the offending reporter, and that a representative of the news service apologized to him privately, over dinner. Kyodo News Service denies this.

In September, Ishihara mobilized seven thousand Self-Defense Force troops and eighteen thousand police for an annual earthquake-readiness drill. The maneuver included personnel carriers, helicopters, and infantrymen wearing camouflage suits and armed with saws and other tools to help clear rubble from the subways. It was the most intimidating display of military power in the capital since the early years of the U.S. occupation. In his instructions to the troops, Ishihara told them they should also be prepared to repel "possible foreign invasion" and added, "Unless we have the will to defend ourselves, no one will lend us a helping hand in earnest." It was clear that Ishihara relished his role as commander-in-chief: television coverage featured him emerging from his helicopter in slow motion to emphasize his decisiveness. His detractors noted that the exercise looked like a war game more than anything else, and accused him, not for the first time, of being a fascist. Was there any truth in that? "I'm a patriot," he said. "But the Japanese word, *aikokusha,* has fascist overtones. When I meet foreign reporters, they always ask if I'm a nationalist, and I used to say 'Of course I am! And so were de Gaulle and Churchill and J.F.K.' But an English friend warned me that 'nationalist' in English has the same ugly resonance as *aikokusha* in Japanese. Now I use the English word 'patriot' even when I'm speaking Japanese."

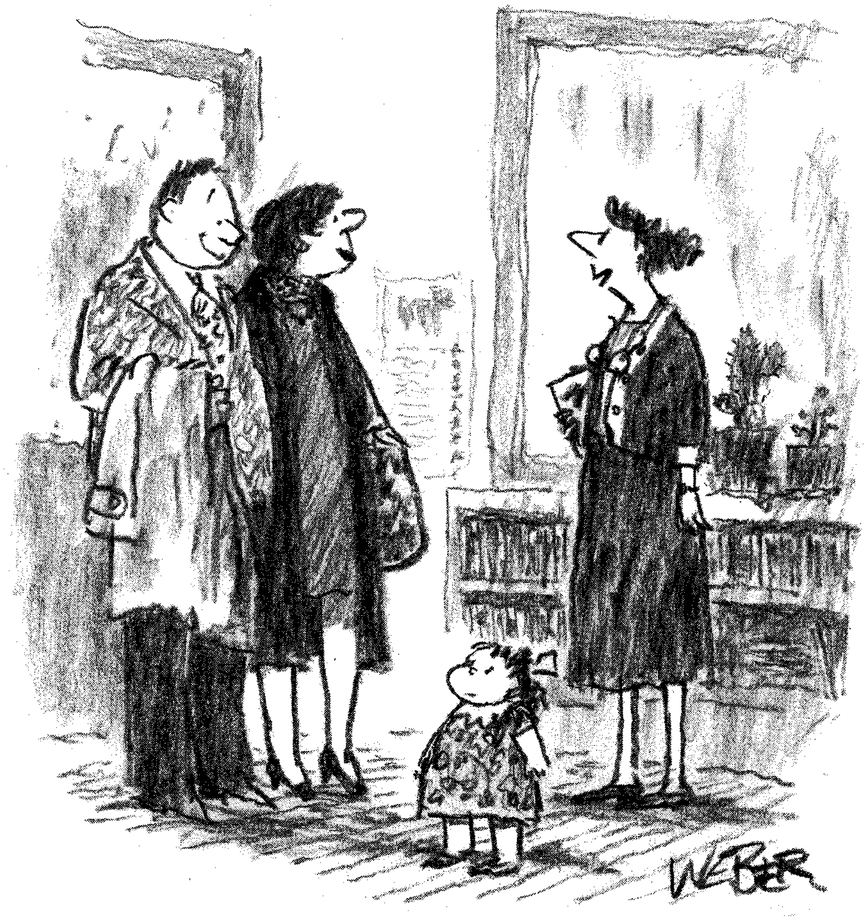
We took a walk from Ishihara's office across the street to the Century Hyatt Hotel. A hotel doorman in a high hat and a coat with epaulettes led the way. A plainclothes agent from the Security Police followed him, and the Governor and I came next. Another plainclothesman was behind us, along with a gaggle of personal assistants who seemed disgruntled at being separated from their boss. It was like being with Tom Cruise. People stopped to stare and giggle; the more intrepid approached to say hello to the Governor. He smiled and bowed. At the entrance to the hotel, a life-sized cardboard figure of Ishihara was smiling benevolently, as if to welcome himself. I had seen figures like it all over town, in subway stations and underground arcades. A sign next to the cutout asked, "Are you doing your part to keep our air clean?"

Wednesday nights at nine, Ishihara appears on a local TV show called "Tokyo Boy." The format is wacky variety: banter on a studio set intercut with slapstick sequences on the street. The other regulars are pranksters in funny hats and outlandish costumes. Sitting among them at a table in his double-breasted suit, Ishihara mixes it up as if he were one of the boys. His cohorts interrupt him to crack jokes. He clowns back. It is an astonishing performance.

"Tokyo Boy" provides Ishihara with an opportunity to establish a personal connection with his constituents. Recent episodes have focussed on a "No! to diesel trucks" campaign, molesters in the subways, high-school truancy and teen-age violence, and reclaiming Yokota Air Base, currently the headquarters of the U.S. forces in Japan. The Wednesday night I was in town, the subject was "Tokyo with Heart." The program began with a sequence that had been taped earlier. Two schoolboys in uniform shorts and elementary-school caps are playing with Pokémon cards in the middle of a busy downtown sidewalk. The crowd hurries by, narrowly avoiding them. A clock in the upper corner of the screen indicates that fifty-seven minutes have elapsed when someone finally stops to yell at the kids for being in the way. At that moment, Ishihara pops around the corner and presents the man with a certificate from the city, "for caring." Turning to the camera, he explains, "In a responsible society, children have the right to be scolded by adults." A comic in a bowler hat comments, "Right on, Gov! Like getting pounded is a privilege!" Ishihara scowls at him in mock disdain.

For the last two months, Ishihara's return to national politics has been the subject of daily speculation. If, as seems likely, a rout occurs in the elections scheduled for July and the L.D.P. loses its majority in the Upper House, Ishihara could join the new majority party, or coalition of parties, run for the Lower House—an election that he would surely win—and then be eligible to accept an endorsement for Prime Minister. He could also rejoin the L.D.P. Or he could run for a seat in the Diet at the head of his own party. Early in March, an independent member of the Lower House, Torao Tokuda, asked him to endorse a field of ten or more candidates for the Upper House elections as a first step in creating an Ishihara Party. Ishihara consented, but so far has declined to run as a candidate himself. In May, Tokuda plans to launch a political organization to be called Citizens' Federation to Make Shintaro Ishihara Prime Minister.

I phoned Ishihara recently to see if he would discuss his plans with me. "If you're about to attack Pearl Harbor, you'd have to be pretty stupid to announce it first," he said. Did that mean he was preparing to take a run at becoming Prime Minister? "The truth is I don't know," he replied. "It depends on lots of things. Whether the L.D.P. comes apart in July. Who's Prime Minister when it does, and who replaces him when he takes responsibility for the defeat and resigns. There are too many variables." And what about writing? Could he be Prime Minister and write the serious novel he talks about? Or would that be a conflict? "It's more than a conflict," he said. "It's a crisis—the biggest crisis of my life." ♦



"Tracy could be a good little poet someday if she'd lose some weight."

FICTION

THE GOD OF DARK LAUGHTER

BY MICHAEL CHABON

Thirteen days after the Entwhistle-Ealing Bros. circus left Ashtown, beating a long retreat toward its winter headquarters in Peru, Indiana, two boys out hunting squirrels in the woods along Portwine Road stumbled on a body that was dressed in a mad suit of purple and orange velour. They found it at the end of a muddy strip of gravel that began, five miles to the west, as Yuggogheny County Road 22A. Another half mile farther to the east and it would have been left to my colleagues over in Fayette County to puzzle out the question of who had shot the man and skinned his head from chin to crown and clavicle to clavicle, taking ears, eyelids, lips, and scalp in a single grisly flap, like the cupped husk of a peeled orange. My name is Edward D. Satterlee, and for the last twelve years I have faithfully served Yuggogheny County as its district attorney, in cases that have all too often run to the outrageous and bizarre. I make the following report in no confidence that it, or I, will be believed, and beg the reader to consider this, at least in part, my letter of resignation.

The boys who found the body were themselves fresh from several hours' worth of bloody amusement with long knives and dead squirrels, and at first the investigating officers took them for the perpetrators of the crime. There was blood on the boys' cuffs, their shirttails, and the bills of their gray twill caps. But the county detectives and I quickly moved beyond Joey Matuszak and Frankie Corro. For all their familiarity with gristle and sinew and the bright-purple discovered interior of a body, the boys had come into the station looking pale and bewildered, and we found ample evidence at the crime scene of their having lost the contents of their stomachs when confronted with the corpse.

Now, I have every intention of setting down the facts of this case as I understand and experienced them, without fear of the reader's doubting them (or my own sanity), but I see no point in mentioning any further *anatomical* details of the crime, except to say that our coroner, Dr. Sauer, though he labored at the problem with a sad fervor, was hard put to establish conclusively that the victim had been dead before his killer went to work on him with a very long, very sharp knife.

The dead man, as I have already mentioned, was attired in a curious suit—the trousers and jacket of threadbare purple velour, the waistcoat bright orange, the whole thing patched with outsized squares of fabric cut from a variety of loudly clashing plaids. It was on account of the patches, along with the victim's cracked and split-soled shoes and a certain undeniable shabbiness in the stuff of the suit, that the primary detective—a man not apt to see deeper than the outermost wrapper of the world (we do not attract, I must confess, the finest police talent in this doleful little corner of western Pennsylvania)—had already figured the victim for a vagrant, albeit one with extraordinarily big feet.

"Those cannot possibly be his real shoes, Ganz, you idiot," I gently suggested. The call, patched through to my boarding house from that gruesome clearing in the woods, had interrupted my supper, which by a grim coincidence had been a Brunswick stew (the specialty of my Virginia-born landlady) of pork and *squirrel*. "They're supposed to make you laugh."

"They *are* pretty funny," said Ganz. "Come to think of it." Detective John Ganz was a large-boned fellow, upholstered in a layer of ruddy flesh. He breathed through his mouth, and walked with a tall man's defeated stoop, and five times a day he took out his comb and ritually plastered his thinning blond hair to the top of his head with a dime-size dab of Tres Flores.

When I arrived at the clearing, having abandoned my solitary dinner, I found the corpse lying just as the young hunters had come upon it, supine, arms thrown up and to either side of the flayed face in a startled attitude that fuelled the hopes of poor Dr. Sauer that the victim's death by gunshot had preceded his mutilation. Ganz or one of the other investigators had kindly thrown a chamois cloth over the vandalized head. I took enough of a peek beneath it to provide me with everything that I or the reader could possibly need to know about the condition of the head—I will never forget the sight of that monstrous, fleshless grin—and to remark the dead man's unusual choice of cravat. It was a giant, floppy bow tie, white with orange and purple polka dots.

"Damn you, Ganz," I said, though I was not in truth addressing the poor fellow, who, I knew, would not be able to answer my question anytime soon. "What's a dead clown doing in my woods?"

We found no wallet on the corpse, nor any kind of identifying objects. My men, along with the better part of the Ashtown Police Department, went over and over the woods east of town, hourly widening the radius of their search. That day, when not attending to my other duties (I was then in the process of breaking up the Dushnyk cigarette-smuggling ring), I managed to work my way back along a chain of inferences to the Entwhistle-Ealing Bros. Circus, which, as I eventually recalled, had recently stayed on the eastern outskirts of Ashtown, at the fringe of the woods where the body was found.

The following day, I succeeded in reaching the circus's general manager, a man named Onheuser, at their winter headquarters in Peru. He informed me over the phone that the company had left Pennsylvania and was now en route to Peru, and I asked him if he had received any reports from the road manager of a clown's having suddenly gone missing.

"Missing?" he said. I wished that I could see his face, for I thought I heard the flatted note of something false in his tone. Perhaps he was merely nervous about talking to a county district attorney. The Entwhistle-Ealing Bros. Circus was a mangy affair, by all accounts, and probably no stranger to pursuit by officers of the court. "Why, I don't believe so, no."

I explained to him that a man who gave every indication of having once been a circus clown had turned up dead in a pinewood outside Ashtown, Pennsylvania.

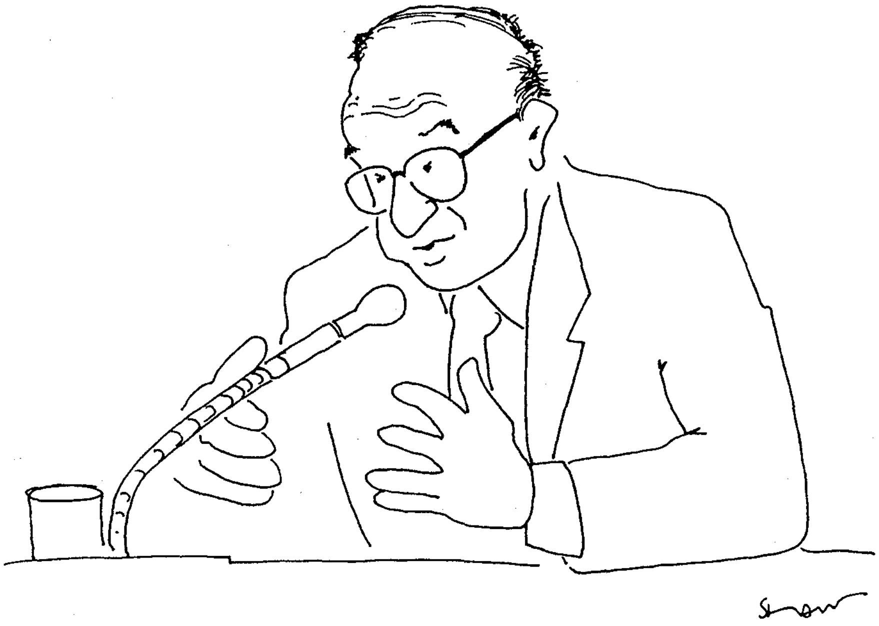
"Oh, no," Onheuser said. "I truly hope he wasn't one of mine, Mr. Satterlee."

"Is it possible you might have left one of your clowns behind, Mr. Onheuser?"

"Clowns are special people," Onheuser replied, sounding a touch on the defensive. "They love their work, but sometimes it can get to be a little, well, too much for them." It developed that Mr. Onheuser had, in his younger days, performed as a clown, under the name of Mr. Wingo, in the circus of which he was now the general manager. "It's not unusual for a clown to drop out for a little while, cool his heels, you know, in some town where he can get a few months of well-earned rest. It isn't *common*, I wouldn't say, but it's not unusual. I will wire my road manager—they're in Canton, Ohio—and see what I can find out."

I gathered, reading between the lines, that clowns were high-strung types, and not above going off on the occasional bender. This poor fellow had probably jumped ship here two weeks ago, holing up somewhere with a case of rye, only to run afoul of a very nasty person, possibly one who harbored no great love of clowns. In fact, I had an odd feeling, nothing more than a hunch, really, that

JOEL-PETER WITKIN, "MELVIN BURKHART: HUMAN ODDITY, FLORIDA" (1985)/PACE/MACGILL GALLERY



" 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves Did gyre and gimble in the wabe; All mimsy were the borogoves, And the mome raths outgrabe fifty basis points."

the ordinary citizens of Ashtown and its environs were safe, even though the killer was still at large. Once more, I picked up a slip of paper that I had tucked into my desk blotter that morning. It was something that Dr. Sauer had clipped from his files and passed along to me. *Coulrophobia: morbid, irrational fear of or aversion to clowns.*

"Er, listen, Mr. Satterlee," Onheuser went on. "I hope you won't mind my asking. That is, I hope it's not a, well, a confidential police matter, or something of the sort. But I know that when I do get through to them, out in Canton, they're going to want to know."

I guessed, somehow, what he was about to ask me. I could hear the prickling fear behind his curiosity, the note of dread in his voice. I waited him out.

"Did they—was there any—how did he die?"

"He was shot," I said, for the moment supplying only the least interesting part of the answer, tugging on that loose thread of fear. "In the head."

"And there was . . . forgive me. No . . . no harm done? To the body? Other than the gunshot wound, I mean to say."

"Well, yes, his head *was* rather savagely mutilated," I said brightly. "Is that what you mean to say?"

"Ah! No, no, I don't—"

"The killer or killers removed all the skin from the cranium. It was very skillfully done. Now, suppose you tell me what you know about it."

There was another pause, and a stream of agitated electrons burbled along between us.

"I don't know anything, Mr. District Attorney. I'm sorry. I really must go now. I'll wire you when I have some—"

The line went dead. He was so keen to hang up on me that he could not even wait to finish his sentence. I got up and went to the shelf where, in recent months, I had taken to keeping a bottle of whiskey tucked behind my bust of Daniel Webster. Carrying the bottle and a dusty glass back to my desk, I sat down and tried to reconcile myself to the thought that I was confronted—not, alas, for the first time in my tenure as chief law-enforcement officer of Yuggogheny County—with a crime whose explanation was going to involve not the usual amalgam of stupidity, meanness, and singularly poor judgment but the incalculable intentions of a being who was genuinely evil. What disheartened me was not that I viewed a crime committed out of the promptings of an evil nature as inherently less liable to solution than the misdeeds of the foolish, the unlucky, or the habitually cruel. On the contrary, evil often expresses itself through refreshingly discernible patterns, through schedules and syllogisms. But the presence of evil, once scented, tends to bring out all that is most irrational and uncontrollable in the public imagination. It is a catalyst for pea-brained theories, gimcrack scholarship, and the credulous cosmologies of hysteria.

At that moment, there was a knock on the door to my office, and Detective Ganz came in. At one time I would have tried to hide the glass of whiskey, behind the typewriter or the photo of my wife and son, but now it did not seem to be worth the effort. I was not fooling anyone. Ganz took note of the glass in my hand with a raised eyebrow and a schoolmarmish pursing of his lips.

"Well?" I said. There had been a brief period, following my son's death and the subsequent suicide of my dear wife, Mary, when I had indulged the pitying regard of my staff. I now found that I regretted having shown such weakness. "What is it, then? Has something turned up?"

"A cave," Ganz said. "The poor bastard was living in a cave."

The range of low hills and hollows separating lower Yuggogheny from Fayette County is rotten with caves. For many years, when I was a boy, a man named Colonel Earnshawe operated penny tours of the iridescent organ pipes and jagged stone teeth of Neighborsburg Caverns, before they collapsed in the mysterious earthquake of 1919, killing the Colonel and his sister Irene, and putting to rest many strange rumors about that eccentric old pair. My childhood friends and I, ranging in the woods, would from time to time come upon the root-choked mouth of a cave exhaling its cool plutonic breath, and dare one another to leave the sunshine and enter that world of shadow—that entrance, as it always seemed to me, to the legendary past itself, where the bones of Indians and Frenchmen might lie moldering. It was in one of these anterooms of buried history that the beam of a flashlight, wielded by a deputy sheriff from Plunkettsburg, had struck the silvery lip of a can of pork and beans. Calling to his companions, the deputy plunged through a curtain of spiderweb and found himself in the parlor, bedroom, and kitchen of the dead man.

There were some cans of chili and hash, a Primus stove, a lantern, a bedroll, a mess kit, and an old Colt revolver, Army issue, loaded and apparently not fired for some time. And there were also books—a Scout guide to roughing it, a collected Blake, and a couple of odd texts, elderly and tattered: one in German called "Über das Finstere Lachen," by a man named Friedrich von Junzt, which appeared to be religious or philosophical in nature, and one a small volume bound in black leather and printed in no alphabet known to me, the letters sinuous and furred with wild diacritical marks.

"Pretty heavy reading for a clown," Ganz said.

"It's not all rubber chickens and hosing each other down with seltzer bottles, Jack."

"Oh, no?"

"No, sir. Clowns have unsuspected depths."

"I'm starting to get that impression, sir."

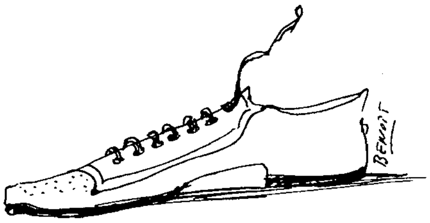
Propped against the straightest wall of the cave, just beside the lantern, there was a large mirror, still bearing the bent clasps and sheared bolts that had once, I inferred, held it to the wall of a filling-station men's room. At its foot was the item that had earlier confirmed to Detective Ganz—and now confirmed to me as I went to inspect it—the recent habitation of the cave by a painted circus clown: a large, padlocked wooden makeup kit, of heavy and rather elaborate construction. I directed Ganz to send for a Pittsburgh criminalist who had served us with discretion in the horrific Primm case, reminding him that nothing must be touched until this Mr. Espy and his black bag of dusts and luminous powders arrived.

The air in the cave had a sharp, briny tinge; beneath it there was a stale animal musk that reminded me, absurdly, of the smell inside a circus tent.

"Why was he living in a cave?" I said to Ganz. "We have a perfectly nice hotel in town."

"Maybe he was broke."

"Or maybe he thought that a hotel was the first place they would look for him."



Ganz looked confused, and a little annoyed, as if he thought I were being deliberately mysterious.

"*Who* was looking for him?"

"I don't know, Detective. Maybe no one. I'm just thinking out loud."

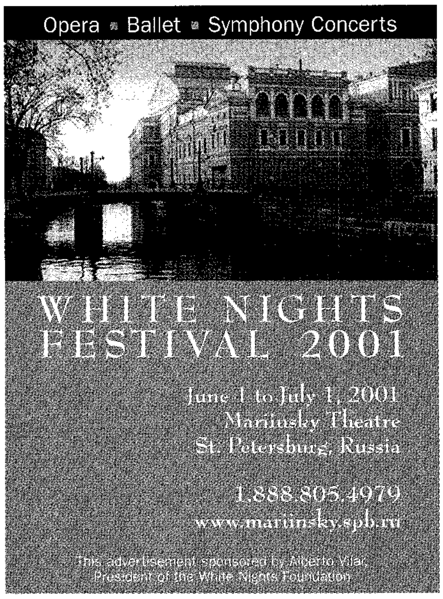
Impatience marred Ganz's fair, bland features. He could tell that I was in the grip of a hunch, and hunches were always among the first considerations ruled out by the procedural practices of Detective John Ganz. My hunches had, admittedly, an uneven record. In the Primm business, one had very nearly got both Ganz and me killed. As for the wayward hunch about my mother's old crony Thaddeus Craven and the strength of his will to quit drinking—I suppose I shall regret indulging that one for the rest of my life.

"If you'll excuse me, Jack . . ." I said. "I'm having a bit of a hard time with the stench in here."

"I was thinking he might have been keeping a pig." Ganz inclined his head to one side and gave an empirical sniff. "It smells like pig to me."

I covered my mouth and hurried outside into the cool, dank pinewood. I gathered in great lungfuls of air. The nausea passed, and I filled my pipe, walking up and down outside the mouth of the cave and trying to connect this new discovery to my talk with the circus man, Onheuser. Clearly, he had suspected that this clown might have met with a grisly end. Not only that, he had known that his fellow circus people would fear the very same thing—as if there were some coulrophobic madman with a knife who was as much a part of circus lore as the prohibition on whistling in the dressing room or on looking over your shoulder when you marched in the circus parade.

I got my pipe lit, and wandered down into the woods, toward the clearing where the boys had stumbled over the dead man, following a rough trail that the police had found. Really, it was not a trail so much as an impromptu alley of broken saplings and trampled ground that wound a convoluted course down the hill from the cave to the clearing. It appeared to have been blazed a few days before by the victim and his pursuer; near the bottom, where the trees gave way to open sky, there were grooves of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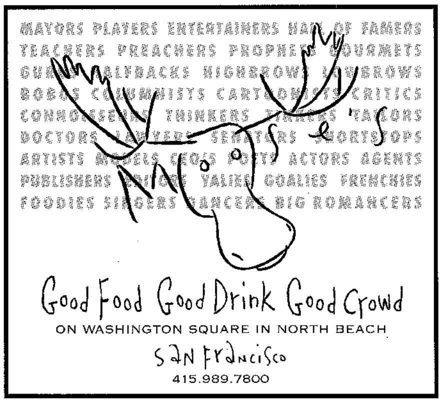
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plowed earth that corresponded neatly with encrustations on the heels of the clown's giant brogues. The killer must have caught the clown at the edge of the clearing, and then dragged him along by the hair, or by the collar of his shirt, for the last twenty-five yards, leaving this furrowed record of the panicked, slipping flight of the clown. The presumed killer's footprints were everywhere in evidence, and appeared to have been made by a pair of long and pointed boots. But the really puzzling thing was a third set of prints, which Ganz had noticed and mentioned to me, scattered here and there along the cold black mud of the path. They seemed to have been made by a barefoot child of eight or nine years. And damned, as Ganz had concluded his report to me, if that barefoot child did not appear to have been dancing!

I came into the clearing, a little short of breath, and stood listening to the wind in the pines and the distant rumble of the state highway, until my pipe went out. It was a cool afternoon, but the sky had been blue all day and the woods were peaceful and fragrant. Nevertheless, I was conscious of a mounting sense of disquiet as I stood over the bed of sodden leaves where the body had been found. I did not then, nor do I now, believe in ghosts, but as the sun dipped down behind the tops of the trees, lengthening the long shadows encompassing me, I became aware of an irresistible feeling that somebody was watching me. After a moment, the feeling intensified, and localized, as it were, so I was certain that to see who it was I need only turn around. Bravely—meaning not that I am a brave man but that I behaved as if I were—I took my matches from my jacket pocket and relit my pipe. Then I turned. I knew that when I glanced behind me I would not see Jack Ganz or one of the other policemen standing there; any of them would have said something to me by now. No, it was either going to be nothing at all or something that I could not even allow myself to imagine.

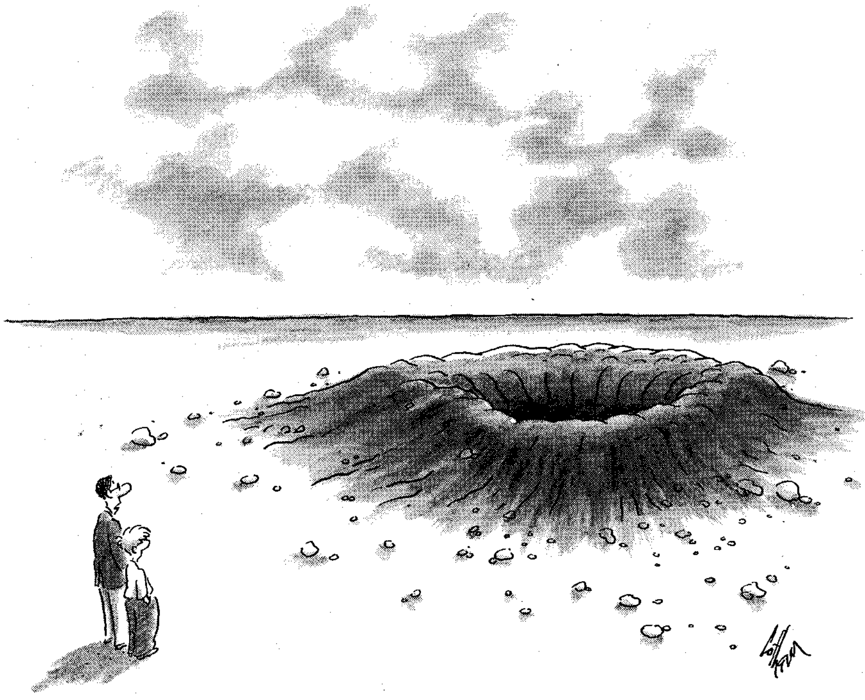
It was, in fact, a baboon, crouching on its hind legs in the middle of the trail, regarding me with close-set orange eyes, one hand cupped at its side. It had great puffed whiskers and a long canine snout. There was something in the barrel chest and the muttonchop sideburns that led me to conclude, correctly, as it turned out, that the specimen was male. For all his majestic bulk, the old fellow presented a rather sad spectacle. His fur was matted and caked with mud, and a sticky coating of pine needles clung to his feet. The expression in his eyes was unsettlingly forlorn, almost pleading, I would have said, and in his mute gaze I imagined I detected a hint of outraged dignity. This might, of course, have been due to the hat he was wearing. It was conical, particolored with orange and purple lozenges, and ornamented at the tip with a bright-orange pompom. Tied under his chin with a length of black ribbon, it hung from the side of his head at a humorous angle. I myself might have been tempted to kill the man who had tied it to my head.

"Was it you?" I said, thinking of Poe's story of the rampaging orang swinging a razor in a Parisian apartment. Had that story had any basis in fact? Could the dead clown have been killed by the pet or sidekick with whom, as the mystery of the animal smell in the cave now resolved itself, he had shared his fugitive existence?

The baboon declined to answer my question. After a moment, though, he raised his long crooked left arm and gestured vaguely toward his belly. The import of this message was unmistakable, and thus I had the answer to my question—if he could not open a can of franks and beans, he would not have been able to perform that awful surgery on his owner or partner.

"All right, old boy," I said. "Let's get you something to eat." I took a step toward him, watching for signs that he might bolt or, worse, throw himself at me. But he sat, looking miserable, clenching something in his right paw. I crossed the distance between us. His rancid-hair smell was unbearable. "You need a bath, don't you?" I spoke, by reflex, as if I were talking to somebody's tired old dog. "Were you and your friend in the habit of bathing together? Were you there when it happened, old boy? Any idea who did it?"

The animal gazed up at me, its eyes kindled with that luminous and sagacious sorrow that lends to the faces of apes and mandrills an air of cousinly reproach, as if we humans have betrayed the principles of our kind. Tentatively, I reached out to him with one hand. He grasped my fingers in his dry leather paw, and then the next instant he had leapt bodily into my arms, like a child seeking solace. The garbage-and-skunk stench of him burned my nose. I gagged and stumbled backward as the baboon scrambled to wrap his arms and legs around me. I must have cried out; a moment later a pair of iron lids seemed



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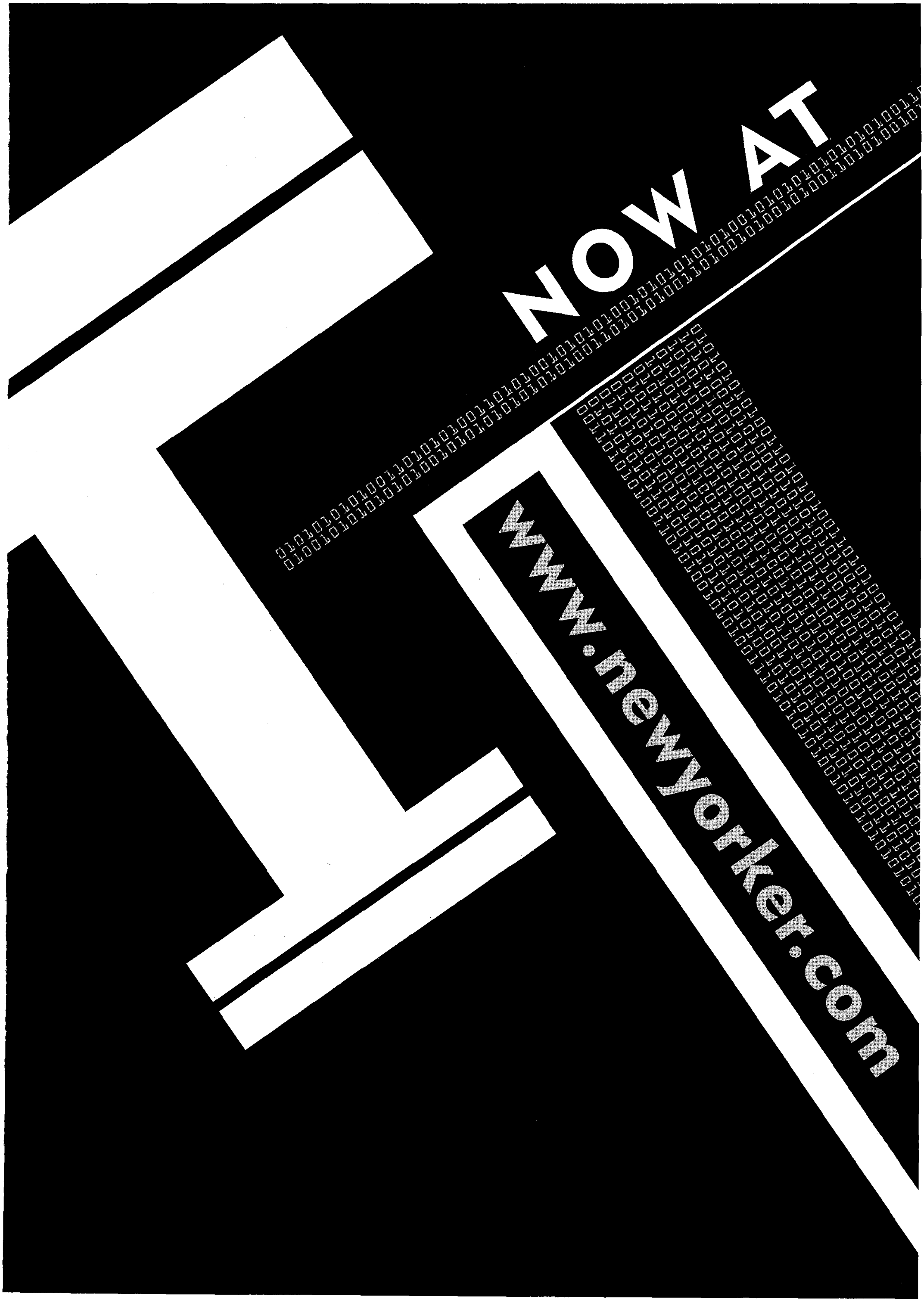
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perhaps, in a small-town library like ours. I returned to the reference shelf, and consulted an encyclopedia of philosophical biography and comparable volumes of philologic reference, but found no entry for any von Junzt—a diplomate, by the testimony of his title page, of the University of Tübingen and of the Sorbonne. It seemed that von Junzt had been dismissed, or expunged, from the dusty memory of his discipline.

It was as I was closing the Encyclopedia of Archaeo-Anthropological Research that a name suddenly leapt out at me, catching my eye just before the pages slammed together. It was a word that I had noticed in von Junzt's book: "Urartu." I barely managed to slip the edge of my thumb into the encyclopedia to mark the place; half a second later and the reference might have been lost to me. As it turned out, the name of von Junzt itself was also contained—sealed up—in the sarcophagus of this entry, a long and tedious one devoted to the work of an Oxford man by the name of St. Dennis T. R. Gladfellow, "a noted scholar," as the entry had it, "in the field of inquiry into the beliefs of the ancient, largely unknown peoples referred to conjecturally today as proto-Urartians." The reference lay buried in a column dense with comparisons among various bits of obsidian and broken bronze:

> G.'s analysis of the meaning of such ceremonial blades admittedly was aided by the earlier discoveries of Friedrich von Junzt, at the site of the former Temple of Yrrh, in north central Armenia, among them certain sacrificial artifacts pertaining to the worship of the proto-Urartian deity Yê-Heh, rather grandly (though regrettably without credible evidence) styled "the god of dark or mocking laughter" by the German, a notorious adventurer and fake whose work, nevertheless, in this instance, has managed to prove useful to science.

The prospect of spending the evening in the company of Herr von Junzt began to seem even less appealing. One of the most tedious human beings I have ever known was my own mother, who, early in my childhood, fell under the spell of Madame Blavatsky and her followers and proceeded to weary my youth and deplete my patrimony with her devotion to that indigestible caseation of balderdash and lies. Mother drew a number of local simpletons into her orbit, among them poor old drunken Thaddeus Craven, and burnt them up as thoroughly as the earth's atmosphere consumes asteroids. The most satisfying episodes of my career have been those which afforded me the opportunity to prosecute charlatans and frauds and those who preyed on the credulous; I did not now relish the thought of sitting at home with such a man all evening, in particular one who spoke only German.

Nevertheless, I could not ignore the undeniable novelty of a murdered circus clown who was familiar with scholarship—however spurious or misguided—concerning the religious beliefs of proto-Urartians. I carried the Köhler's over to the counter, where Lucy Brand waited eagerly for me to spill some small ration of beans. When I offered nothing for her delectation, she finally spoke.

"Was he a German?" she said, showing unaccustomed boldness, it seemed to me.

"Was *who* a German, my dear Miss Brand?"

"The victim." She lowered her voice to a textbook librarian's whisper, though there was no one in the building but old Bob Spherakis, asleep and snoring in the periodicals room over a copy of *Grit.*

"I—I don't know," I said, taken aback by the simplicity of her inference, or rather by its having escaped me. "I suppose he may have been, yes."

She slid the book across the counter toward me.

"There was another one of them in here this afternoon," she said. "At least, I think he was a German. A Jew, come to think of it. Somehow he managed to find the only book in Hebrew we have in our collection. It's one of the books old Mr. Vorzeichen donated when he died. A prayer book, I think it is. Tiny little thing. Black leather."

This information ought to have struck a chord in my memory, of course, but it did not. I settled my hat on my head, bid Miss Brand good night, and walked slowly home, with the dictionary under my arm, and, in my briefcase, von Junzt's stout tome and the little black-leather volume filled with sinuous mysterious script.

I will not tax the reader with an account of my struggles with Köhler's dictionary and the thorny bramble of von Junzt's overheated German prose. Suffice to say that it took me the better part of the evening to make my way through the introduction. It was well past midnight by the time I arrived at the first chapter, and nearing two o'clock before I had amassed the information that I will now pass along to the reader, with no endorsement beyond the testimony of these pages, nor any hope of its being believed.

It was a blustery night; I sat in the study on the top floor of my old house's round tower, listening to the windows rattle in their casements, as if a gang of intruders were seeking a way in. In this high room, in 1885, it was said, Howard Ash, the last living descendant of our town's founder, General Hannaniah Ash, had sealed the blank note of his life and dispatched himself, with postage due, to his Creator. A fugitive draft blew from time to time across my desk and stirred the pages of the dictionary by my left hand. I felt, as I read, as if the whole world were asleep—benighted, ignorant, and dreaming—while I had been left to man the crow's nest, standing lonely vigil in the teeth of a storm that was blowing in from a tropic of dread.

According to the scholar or charlatan Friedrich von Junzt, the regions around what is now northern Armenia had spawned, along with an entire cosmology, two competing cults of incalculable antiquity, which survived to the present day: that of Yê-Heh, the God of Dark Laughter, and that of Ai, the God of Unbearable and Ubiquitous Sorrow. The Yê-Hehists viewed the universe as a cosmic hoax, perpetrated by the father-god Yrrh for unknowable purposes: a place of calamity and cruel irony so overwhelming that the only possible response was a malevolent laughter like that, presumably, of Yrrh himself. The laughing followers of baboon-headed Yê-Heh created a sacred burlesque, mentioned by Pausanias and by one of the travellers in Plutarch's dialogue "On the Passing of the Oracles," to express their mockery of life, death, and all human aspirations. The rite involved the flaying of a human head, severed from the shoulders of one who had died in battle or in the course of some other supposedly exalted endeavor. The clown-priest would don the bloodless mask and then dance, making a public travesty of the noble dead. Through generations of inbreeding, the worshippers of Yê-Heh had evolved into a virtual subspecies of humanity, characterized by distended grins and skin as white as chalk. Von Junzt even claimed that the tradition of painted circus clowns derived from the clumsy imitation, by noninitiates, of these ancient kooks.

The "immemorial foes" of the baboon boys, as the reader may have surmised, were the followers of Ai, the God Who Mourns. These gloomy fanatics saw the world as no less horrifying and cruel than did their archenemies, but their response to the whole mess was a more or less permanent wailing. Over the long millennia since the heyday of ancient Urartu, the Aiites had developed a complicated physical discipline, a sort of jujitsu or calisthenics of murder, which they chiefly employed in a ruthless hunt of followers of Yê-Heh. For they believed that Yrrh, the Absent One, the Silent Devisor who, an eternity ago, tossed the cosmos over his shoulder like a sheet of fish wrap and wandered away leaving not a clue as to his intentions, would not return to explain the meaning of his inexplicable and tragic creation until the progeny of Yê-Heh, along with all copies of the Yê-Hehist sacred book, "Khndzut Dzul," or "The Unfathomable Ruse," had been expunged from the face of the earth. Only then would Yrrh return from his primeval hiatus—"bringing what new horror or redemption," as the German intoned, "none can say."

All this struck me as a gamier variety of the same loony, Zoroastrian plonk that my mother had spent her life decanting, and I might have been inclined to set the whole business aside and leave the case to be swept under the administrative rug by Jack Ganz had it not been for the words with which Herr von Junzt concluded the second chapter of his tedious work:

> While the Yê-Hehist gospel of cynicism and ridicule has, quite obviously, spread around the world, the cult itself has largely died out, in part through the predations of foes and in part through chronic health problems brought about by inbreeding. Today [von Junzt's book carried a date of 1849] it is reported that there may be fewer than 150 of the Yê-Hehists left in the world. They have survived, for the most part, by taking on work in travelling circuses. While their existence is known to ordinary members of the circus world, their secret has, by and large, been kept. And in the sideshows they have gone to

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ground, awaiting the tread outside the wagon, the shadow on the tent-flap, the cruel knife that will, in a mockery of their own long-abandoned ritual of mockery, deprive them of the lily-white flesh of their skulls.

Here I put down the book, my hands trembling from fatigue, and took up the other one, printed in an unknown tongue. "The Unfathomable Ruse"? I hardly thought so; I was inclined to give as little credit as I reasonably could to Herr von Junzt's account. More than likely the small black volume was some inspirational text in the mother tongue of the dead man, a translation of the Gospels, perhaps. And yet I must confess that there were a few tangential points in von Junzt's account that caused me some misgiving.

There was a scrape then just outside my window, as if a finger with a very long nail were being drawn almost lovingly along the glass. But the finger turned out to be one of the branches of a fine old horse-chestnut tree that stood outside the tower, scratching at the window in the wind. I was relieved and humiliated. Time to go to bed, I said to myself. Before I turned in, I went to the shelf and moved to one side the bust of Galen that I had inherited from my father, a country doctor. I took a quick snort of good Tennessee whiskey, a taste for which I had also inherited from the old man. Thus emboldened, I went over to the desk and picked up the books. To be frank, I would have preferred to leave them there—I would have preferred to burn them, to be really frank—but I felt that it was my duty to keep them about me while they were under my watch. So I slept with the books beneath my pillow, in their wax envelopes, and I had the worst dream of my life.

It was one of those dreams where you are a fly on the wall, a phantom bystander, disembodied, unable to speak or intervene. In it, I was treated to the spectacle of a man whose young son was going to die. The man lived in a corner of the world where, from time to time, evil seemed to bubble up from the rusty red earth like a black combustible compound of ancient things long dead. And yet, year after year, this man met each new outburst of horror, true to his code, with nothing but law books, statutes, and county ordinances, as if sheltering with only a sheet of newspaper those he had sworn to protect, insisting that the steaming black geyser pouring down on them was nothing but a light spring rain. That vision started me laughing, but the cream of the jest came when, seized by a spasm of forgiveness toward his late, mad mother, the man decided not to prosecute one of her old paramours, a rummy by the name of Craven, for driving under the influence. Shortly thereafter, Craven steered his old Hudson Terraplane the wrong way down a one-way street, where it encountered, with appropriate cartoon sound effects, an oncoming bicycle ridden by the man's heedless, darling, wildly pedalling son. That was the funniest thing of all, funnier than the amusing ironies of the man's profession, than his furtive drinking and his wordless, solitary suppers, funnier even than his having been widowed by suicide: the joke of a father's outliving his boy. It was so funny that, watching this ridiculous man in my dream, I could not catch my breath for laughing. I laughed so hard that my eyes popped from their sockets, and my smile stretched until it broke my aching jaw. I laughed until the husk of my head burst like a pod and fell away, and my skull and brains went floating off into the sky, white dandelion fluff, a cloud of fairy parasols.

Around four o'clock in the morning, I woke and was conscious of someone in the room with me. There was an unmistakable tang of the sea in the air. My eyesight is poor and it took me a while to make him out in the darkness, though he was standing just beside my bed, with his long thin arm snaked under my pillow, creeping around. I lay perfectly still, aware of the tips of this slender shadow's fingernails and the scrape of his scaly knuckles, as he rifled the contents of my head and absconded with them through the bedroom window, which was somehow also the mouth of the Neighborsburg Caverns, with tiny old Colonel Earnshaw taking tickets in the booth.

I awakened now in truth, and reached immediately under the pillow. The books were still there. I returned them to the evidence room at eight o'clock this morning. At nine, there was a call from Dolores and Victor Abbott, at their motor lodge out on the Plunkettsburg Pike. A guest had made an abrupt departure, leaving a mess. I got into a car with Ganz and we drove out to get a look. The Ashtown police were already there, going over the buildings and grounds of the Vista Dolores Lodge. The bathroom wastebasket of Room 201 was overflowing with blood-soaked bandages. There was evidence that the guest had been keeping some kind of live bird in the room; one of the neighboring guests reported that it had sounded like a crow. And over the whole room there hung a salt smell that I recognized immediately, a smell that some compared to the smell of the ocean, and others to that of blood. When the pillow, wringing wet, was sent up to Pittsburgh for analysis by Mr. Espy, it was found to have been saturated with human tears.

When I returned from court, late this afternoon, there was a message from Dr. Sauer. He had completed his postmortem and wondered if I would drop by. I took the bottle from behind Daniel Webster and headed on down to the county morgue.

"He was already dead, the poor son of a biscuit eater," Dr. Sauer said, looking less morose than he had the last time we spoke. Sauer was a gaunt old Methodist who avoided strong language but never, so long as I had known him, strong drink. I poured us each a tumbler, and then a second. "It took me a while to establish it because there was something about the fellow that I was missing."

"What was that?"

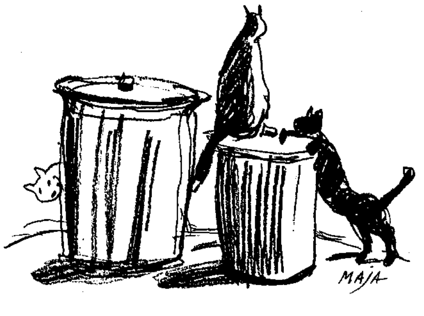
"Well, I'm reasonably sure that he was a hemophiliac. So my reckoning time of death by coagulation of the blood was all thrown off."

"Hemophilia," I said.

"Yes," Dr. Sauer said. "It is associated sometimes with inbreeding, as in the case of royal families of Europe."

Inbreeding. We stood there for a while, looking at the sad bulk of the dead man under the sheet.

"I also found a tattoo," Dr. Sauer added. "The head of a grinning baboon. On his left forearm. Oh, and one other thing. He suffered from some kind of vitiligo. There are white patches on his nape and throat."



Let the record show that the contents of the victim's makeup kit, when it was inventoried, included cold cream, rouge, red greasepaint, a powder puff, some brushes, cotton swabs, and five cans of foundation in a tint the label described as "Olive Male." There was no trace, however, of the white greasepaint with which clowns daub their grinning faces.

Here I conclude my report, and with it my tenure as district attorney for this blighted and unfortunate county. I have staked my career—my life itself—on the things I could see, on the stories I could credit, and on the eventual vindication, when the book was closed, of the reasonable and skeptical approach. In the face of twenty-five years of bloodshed, mayhem, criminality, and the universal human pastime of ruination, I have clung fiercely to Occam's razor, seeking always to keep my solutions unadorned and free of conjecture, and never to resort to conspiracy or any kind of prosecutorial woolgathering. My mother, whenever she was confronted by calamity or personal sorrow, invoked cosmic emanations, invisible empires, ancient prophecies, and intrigues; it has been the business of my life to reject such folderol and seek the simpler explanation. But we were fools, she and I, arrant blockheads, each of us blind to or heedless of the readiest explanation: that the world is an ungettable joke, and our human need to explain its wonders and horrors, our appalling genius for devising such explanations, is nothing more than the rim shot that accompanies the punch line.

I do not know if that nameless clown was the last, but in any case, with such pursuers, there can be few of his kind left. And if there is any truth in the grim doctrine of those hunters, then the return of our father Yrrh, with his inscrutable intentions, cannot be far off. But I fear that, in spite of their efforts over the last ten thousand years, the followers of Ai are going to be gravely disappointed when, at the end of all we know and everything we have ever lost or imagined, the rafters of the world are shaken by a single, a terrible guffaw. ♦

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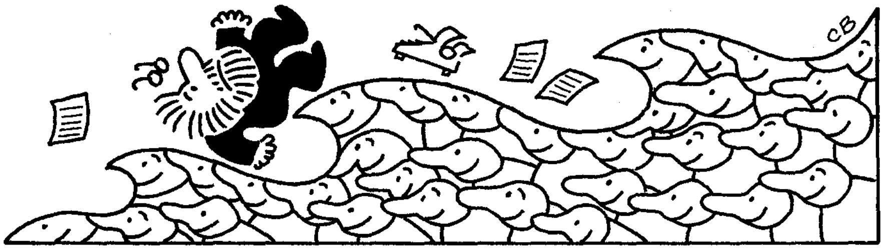


THE THEATRE

BLOODSUCKER'S BALL

Camp, cult, and Complicite.

BY JOHN LAHR

Bats, as we know, sleep upside down. So it follows, almost as the day the night, that any musical team obsessed with telling the story of a bloodsucking, feral, pointy-eared Bat Boy with an overbite is going to see both life and the musical topsy-turvy. "Bat Boy: The Musical" (at the Union Square Theatre) takes place in a world of shadows and mutants, otherwise known as Hope Falls, a West Virginia town where even hopefulness—the Broadway musical's stock-in-trade—is something to joke about. If you factor in a brutalist set painted in various shades of black, which looks a substantial six-figure sum less than a million dollars, a cast of ten playing an entire redneck community, along with the various animals that the plot requires, you have a contrarian's daydream. The Boy in question, half bat, half human, emerges from his childhood cave life into adult bourgeois life—a kind of "My Fair Bat Boy" with, er, bite. The musical world he enters is one of darkness, not light, of ironies, not idealism, where plot is a history of abdications and song extolls the emptiness of all the standard credos: Christianity, family, community, love, redemption, and the musical itself. It's a jejune vision, but a smart, playful, and funny one nonetheless. And at least the entrepreneurs of this gleeful nihilism—book by Keythe Farley and Brian Flemming, music and lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe, direction by Scott Schwartz—have the courage of their lack of convictions.

For about half of the first act, which is swamped by clumsy exposition and some heavy-handed lyrical observations about the hypocrisy of God-fearing folk ("If he turns into a pain / Call me, / I got stun guns and a chain," the sheriff sings in a song called "Christian Charity"), the show feels more turkey than bat. But when the petrified Bat Boy (the memorable Deven May, who pitches the character somewhere between Freud's Wolf Man, Michael Crawford's Phantom, and Jerry Lewis's flapping spastic) is brought, autistically keening, into the local veterinarian's home, and the vet's prim, frigid wife, Meredith (the excellent Kaitlin Hopkins), promises sexual favors to her sex-starved husband, Thomas (Sean McCourt), if he will keep, not kill, the freak, the evening starts to cook.

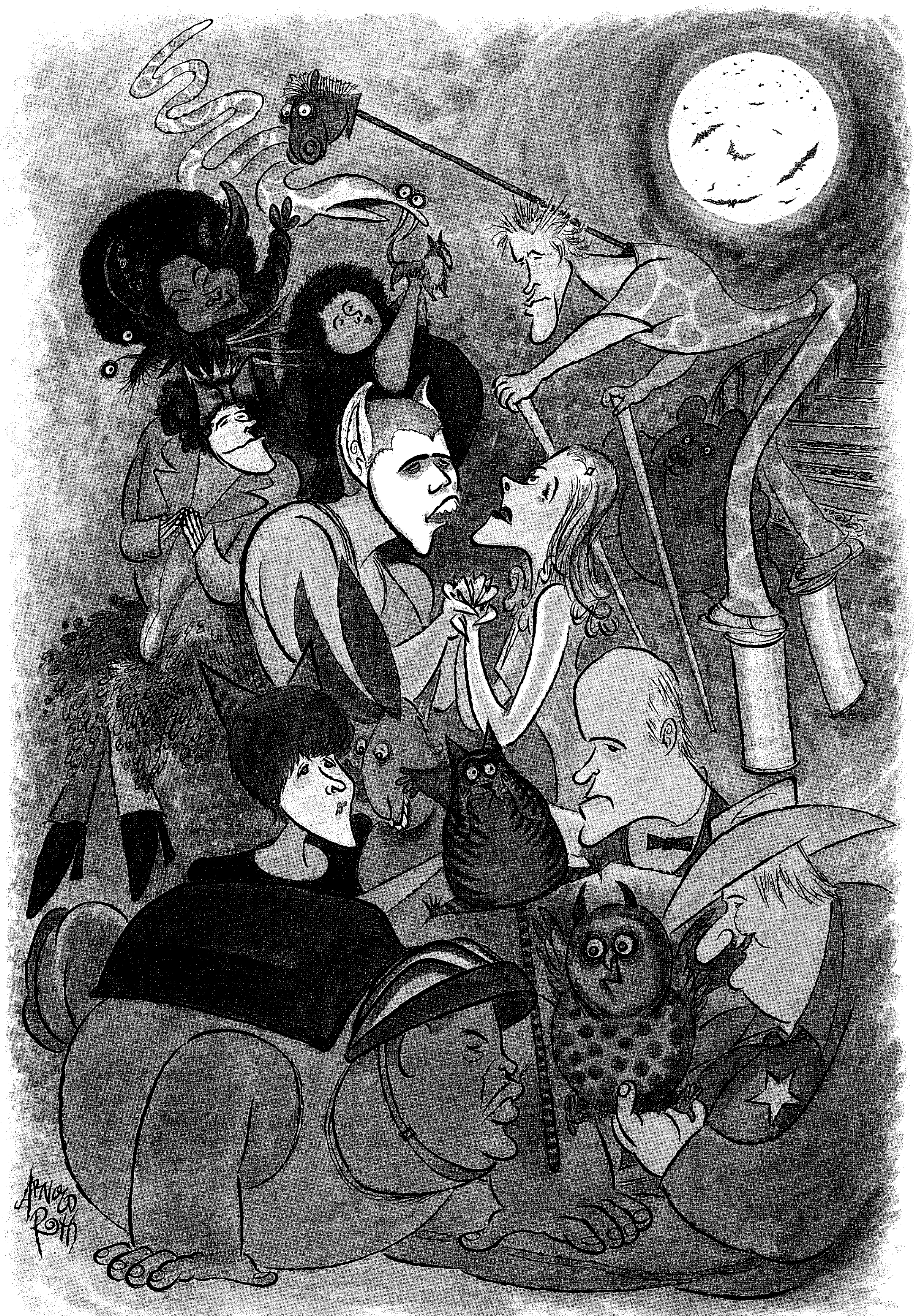
"Bat Boy" soon becomes a story about relationships, and the audience, like the vet and his family, is forced to wrestle with the humanity of the monstrous. In a terrific song, "Show You a Thing or Two," during which Meredith and her adolescent daughter, Shelley (the fervent and funny Kerry Butler), teach Bat Boy—now known to them as Edgar—to speak, to read, to behave ("A bit more schooling; a lot less drooling"), and to overachieve, both the musical and Bat Boy come to life. He begins the song mouthing vowels and ends it mouthing bons mots. It's a hilarious and affectionate parody of Professor Higgins and Eliza Doolittle (Bat Boy inadvertently even pays homage: "I think I've got it!" he shouts), and O'Keefe's lyrics here are particularly witty and adroit. When Bat Boy's mental energy starts to flag, the vet, who has a vested interest in keeping his wife content, slips him a rat to gobble. (This is the only play in the history of the theatre whose hero ends Act I with a rabbit in his mouth and moves on, in Act II, to an entire cow's head.) The intake of blood turns Bat Boy into a whirlwind of eclectic knowledge and a model, incidentally, of the reconstituted, perfected American self, asserting its vindictive intellectual triumph:

I'm gonna Vince van Gogh them
And Henry Thoreau them,
And Plato,
And Cato,
And Edgar Allan Poe them . . .
Gonna Jackie O them,
Marilyn Monroe them
Botticelli,
Machiavelli,
Larry, Curly and Moe them!

From this song, Bat Boy emerges as a full-fledged preppy, with blazer, Weejuns, and Received Pronunciation. He looks and sounds British; he thinks Yiddish. He wants a piece of society's action. "I want to know my neighbors, / I'm not some garden gnome, / Why can't I make this world my home?" he sings. As he wrestles with the problem of loving both the Lamb of God and the Lamb's blood, the musical cleverly takes him to the brink of spiritual cliché and then reverses direction. For a few terrible minutes, it looks as if Bat Boy were going to be born again—maybe even become a Christ figure. But when he is framed for murder he flees the outraged community and heads into the woods. Shelley goes after him, and they meet in a crepuscular glade. (Shelley: "How did you find me?" Bat Boy: "I see very well in this light.") The moment is right for love, but in the annals of the contemporary musical there is nothing quite as inspired and silly as the next scene. The would-be lovers run smack into a cloven-hoofed, shaggy-legged, spectacularly codpieced Pan (Jim Price), who calls up a polymorphously perverse Eden—a time before sin—where any species could roger anything that

ARNOLD ROTH

In the annals of the contemporary musical, there is nothing quite as inspired and silly as "Bat Boy" 's animal orgy.


Arnold Roth

moved. Up to this point in the production, stuffed cats and rabbits and ducks have been used to enhance the low-budget camp; now, as Pan sings, "Fur and feathers making love, / Paws and claws and jaws and beaks. / Let the song go on / For weeks and weeks," the cast members enter with what looks like the entire stuffed-animal department of F.A.O. Schwarz strapped to their bodies. Horses, rabbits, a fox, a raccoon, a lobster, an eagle, a turtle, an owl, a spider, a snake, even a giraffe (an actor standing on yellow tin cans and holding a makeshift head) throw themselves into the orgy. As Bat Boy and Shelley look on from their bower, the animal kingdom humps its stuffed heart out in a howling spectacle that ingeniously pillories the tame, sexless, sentimental harmony of nature in Disney's "The Lion King."

When Shelley and Bat Boy sing their inevitable love duet, "Inside Your Heart," the show reaches the apogee of its mischievous deconstruction, the moment when story and satire collide to make something that actually feels new. O'Keefe's lyrics, echoing those of "West Side Story" 's star-crossed lovers, brilliantly travesty the masochism of the traditional love song, with its romantic notions of symbiosis and suffering without reward. Shelley wants to merge with Bat Boy; now, thanks to his particular blood lust, she actually can. She offers him a vein. "This way you'll be mine at last," she sings. "And I'll be fine: I heal real fast." Together, they continue, "I will shield you from harm; / Come spend your life on my arm." But when their love is frustrated in a bona-fide Freudian nightmare—you gotta be there to believe it!—Bat Boy does what every Broadway individualist does: he asserts his right to be himself. "At last I am embracing / My bloody destiny!" he sings, as he grasps a cow's head oozing blood and parodies Sondheim. "REVENGE will be a home for . . . / ME!!! / For ME!!! / For . . . MEEEEEEE!!!"

Bat Boy's revenge is, finally, a revenge on the musical. The gruesome ending that leaves him, and others, dead is a hat trick of mayhem, which in any other example of the genre would be required to have meaning. True to form, "Bat Boy" 's authors draw only a perverse lesson, one whose irony strikes a happily barbarous note: "Know your Bat Boy, / Love your Bat Boy. / Don't deny your beast inside!" the cast sings at the finale. The show does just that; it's a hymn to the sadistic, not the optimistic. Still, "Bat Boy" is a kind of transition back to narrative and away from the kudzu of emotional cliché that clings to and smothers Broadway musicals. Courage wants to laugh; but there's laughter that promotes thought and laughter that promotes entropy. Once the bright sparks who made "Bat Boy" learn the difference, they'll have the wherewithal to write something truly important. For now, they'll have to make do with a giggling cult hit.

The Sedarises—the actress and writer Amy and her brother, the writer David, who make up the soi-disant Talent Family—also like to giggle at the intolerance of the faithful. "The Book of Liz," at the Greenwich House Theatre, is a jolly seventy-five-minute sketch about the sweating, mousy Elizabeth (Amy Sedaris), a demure Puritan believer from the religious Squeamish Community and the maestro of its main source of income—the cheese ball—who goes walkabout after being stripped of her control over the kitchen and refused the honor of organizing the Chastity Parade. Her picaresque adventure is a peculiarly Off-Broadway use of the genre; here, the character goes everywhere and learns nothing. Therefore, as comic drama "The Book of Liz" is a sort of amateur fizzle; it does, however, offer the Sedarises the opportunity to tell some very good jokes in silly costumes and to bask in the smug downtown certainty of a soiled world. For instance, a bitchy character warns the innocent Elizabeth that one of her cohorts is a boozer and explains the subtext of alcoholism: "The subtext is 'I can't control my love of the grape, but I can control *you*.' " The audience laughed so long at this joke that I thought the auditorium would rise en masse to recite the Serenity Prayer. The cast, especially Jackie Hoffman, who has the face of Ed Wynn and the body of Bette Midler, does more mugging than a ringful of W.W.F. wrestlers. On her travels, Liz gets to wear a Planter's peanut outfit and to work in a restaurant called Plymouth Crock, which is populated entirely, it seems, by gay A.A. members; she even seeks medical help for her perspiration problem—an incident that provides a rare but terrific sight gag. At the doctor's office, she comes out from behind a screen holding a little white cup. "Is this enough?" she says. The doctor looks at it. "Oh, Liz, I'm sorry," the doctor says. "When I said go to the bathroom I meant for you to urinate." In the end, Elizabeth returns to the Squeamish Community, which has been reduced to penury because the cheese balls aren't the same without her, and the missing secret ingredient is revealed: Liz's sweat. This explains not only the play but a larger conundrum the evening raises. In the lobby, Ms. Sedaris—"Amy's Concessions"—was offering cupcakes with white frosting. At two dollars each, the price was high, but then, as I understood from the play, she'd put a lot of sweat into them.

For sheer theatrical aplomb—the exhilarating marriage of the surreal body to the surreal intellect—nothing can top London's Theatre de Complicite's renowned "Mnemonic" (at the John Jay College Theatre). The show begins with the Theatre's director, the actor Simon McBurney, as Virgil, in manic cogitation on the subject of the brain and how we remember—what he calls the "sprouting" of synapses and "high-speed orienteering," by which the mind recalls and, in fact, invents the past. Then McBurney and his disciplined troupe play the same game on the audience. We sit, as if peering into McBurney's brain, as the three stories he tells—his own, the story of his girlfriend's disappearance, and the strange history of the discovery in a glacier of the body of a five-thousand-year-old man—crosscut and careen around the stage. All these fragments are woven together and finally connected in a simulacrum of the brain's turbulence. They unravel with the lucidity, the detachment, and the surprise of a Magritte—with startling images and sounds, momentary connections, and jolting shifts of focus. We struggle to hold on to the rush of events, to make a pattern, to impose order, to winkle out the resonances and symbols, and to make them mean something. "Mnemonic," with its steely rigor and hell-for-leather pace, is a reminder that we ourselves are a work of fiction; remembering our life is an act of imagination. In the case of the Theatre de Complicite, this endeavor is ravishing. ♦

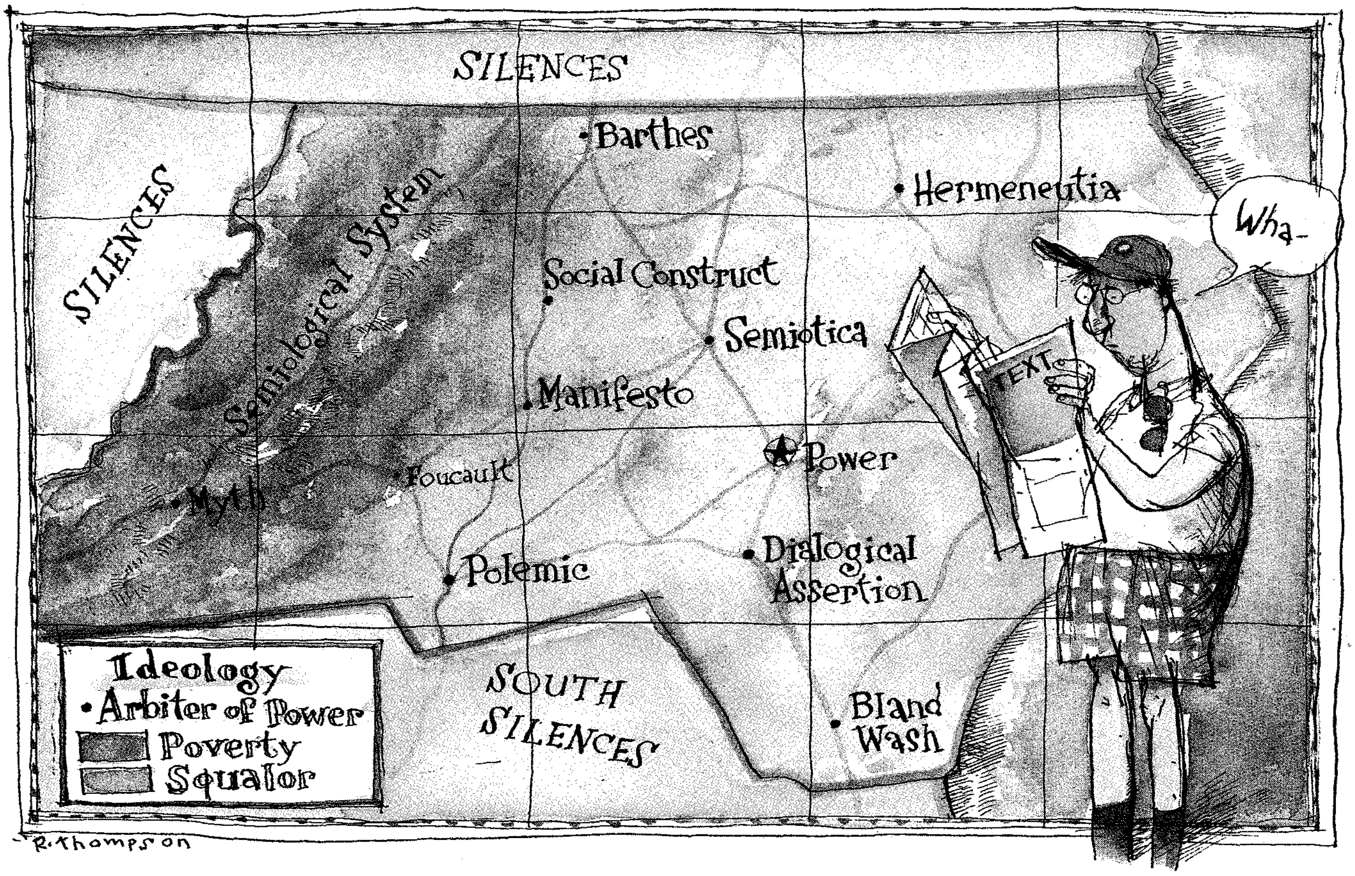
BOOKS

ATLAS SHRUGS

The new geography argues that maps have shaped the world.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

After the Second World War, most of the Ivy League universities abolished their departments of geography, and the subject inexorably began to slip, at least in the mind of the general public, into the realm of junior-high-school memorization of place-names and climatic zones. (The advent, whenever it was, of Geography, the annoying word game that children insist on playing during road trips, didn't elevate the image of the discipline, either.) But geography is back. In the past couple of decades, a group of mostly British, mostly left-wing scholars—David Harvey, David Woodward, J. B. Harley, and others—have created a field known, variously, as "critical geography" and "the new geography." They have taken up residence in the remaining university geography departments in this country, and have started turning out protégés and publications, promoting a new, more cunning way of looking at maps.



Once you've encountered critical geography, you'll never again read a map as just a straightforward set of directions.

RICHARD THOMPSON

When you think about it, geography is a rich subject. Much of the politics and economics of the world revolves around the question of who controls what space, and to what end. This was plainly true during the Age of Exploration that we all learned about—though we may have been so intent on remembering the difference between Vasco da Gama and Vasco Núñez de Balboa that we didn't notice—and it's still true today, in the age of the global economy and metropolitan sprawl. Here in the United States, the idea of the vanished frontier, a pure geographical construct, has shaped our understanding of ourselves for a century.

One of the main subspecialties of critical geography is critical cartography, the study of maps and mapmaking. We're accustomed to thinking of maps as useful objects, whose purpose is to direct us from one location to another, or, in the case of old maps, as fanciful arrangements of bright-colored ink on paper, most evocative for what they get wrong. Clearly, though, maps have played an enormous part in shaping the nonphysical world. States, nations, empires, even continents are not natural geographic features, and their existence would be impossible without maps. The mapping of the world has been one of the monumental human endeavors.

Now playing at the New York Public Library is a charming exhibition, assembled by Alice Hudson, the chief of the library's Map Division, called "Heading West: Mapping the Territory." The show, a cartographic record of the American West, is made up of selections from the library's collection of half a million maps. "This is the old geography," Hudson told me the other day, when she walked me through the show. She pointed to a Union Pacific Railway map from 1881, on which somebody had scribbled a couple of sentences, probably from a telegraphed message, and drawn fresh lines showing the latest extension of a rail line. What could be more straightforward and practical than that? The show has an aesthetic aspect, too. Hudson obviously loves the craftsmanship of cartography, and she has found some wonderful specimens. Geological and botanical maps from the period of initial Western exploration are composed and colored (usually by nameless government bureaucrats) with a startling intensity and grace. The star of the show—Hudson's big rediscovery—is the incredibly detailed, meticulously shaded engraving work of Frederick Von Egloffstein, a nineteenth-century Prussian émigré who produced both maps and views of the West. His drawing of the rim of the Grand Canyon, for example, makes it easy to strip away the many coats of tourist culture and imagine how forbidding and awful it must once have appeared.

SILENCE, WITH TWO TEXTS

When we lived together, the silence in the home
was denser than the silence in the home
after he left. Before, the silence
had been like a large commotion or industry
at a distance, like the downroar of mining. When he went,
I studied my husband's silence like an almost
holy thing, the call of a newborn born
mute. Text: "Though its presence is detected
by the absence of what it negates, silence
possesses a power which presages fear
for those in its midst. Unseen, unheard,
unfathomable, silence dis-
concerts because it conceals." Text:
"The waters compassed me about, even to
the soul: the depth closed me round
about, the weeds were wrapped about
my head." We lived alongside him, in his hush
and patience, sometimes we teased him, calling his
abstracted mask "Dad's alligator look,"
seeking how to love him as
he was, under the law that he could not
speak, and when I shrieked against the law
he shrinked down into its absolute,
he rose from its departure gate.
And he seemed almost like a hero, to me,
living, as I was, under the law
that I could not see the ones I loved
but only consort with them as beings
fixed as elements. In the last
weeks, by day we moved through the tearing
apart, along its length, of the union,
and by night silence lay down with blindness,
and sang, and saw.

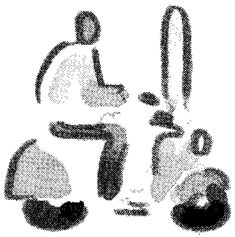
—*Sharon Olds*

At the same time, historical maps are necessarily suffused with the agendas, beyond accuracy and elegance, of their makers: maps serve interests. The earliest maps exhibited in "Heading West," which date from before 1700, hopefully depict the Americas as an island or, at least, a raggedy blob that ships might cruise past on their way to trade in Asia. Almost immediately after the West was accurately mapped, the familiar ruler lines and colors of political division appear; very soon after that the property grids and rail lines of commerce are evident; and, finally, the maps acquire an exaggerated pictorial style associated with the promotion of tourism and residential real estate. Put into historical perspective, every map on display communicates a sense not just of a piece of land but also of the apportionment of money and power in the world at a particular moment.

The father of critical cartography, and therefore of the idea that a map should be understood as more than just a set of directions, was J. B. Harley, a map historian who died ten years ago. Harley spent most of his life in England and, in middle age, moved to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he helped launch an ambitious publishing series called the History of Cartography. This spring, Johns Hopkins is bringing out a collection of his essays, "The New Nature of Maps" ($45). It is a curious book, which manages to make the case both for and (unwittingly) against critical cartography. Harley seems to have been one of those academics whose careers are spent reconnoitring the lower slopes of a magnum opus—in his case, a book to be called "The Map as Ideology"—without ever writing it. His œuvre thus consists of essays that display great erudition but make quick, darting points rather than full, sustained arguments. Harley was a follower of Michel Foucault, who held that all knowledge is a form of power. Rummaging through the history of mapmaking, Harley has found enough material to bear out Foucault's idea, at least in the realm of cartography.

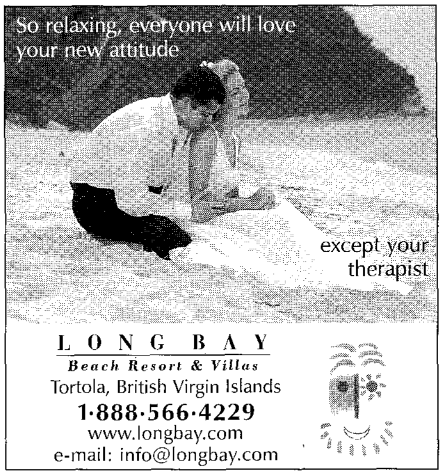
Before mass production, only the powerful had access to maps. Much early mapping was done by people who had job titles like Geographer to the King. (Even now, a large share of mapping, including American mapping, is done by governments.) Maps were a way of locating resources, so that the map-holding few could get their hands on them, and of establishing control over land. As Harley points out in one of his essays, old maps of England often demarcate the estates of noblemen as if they were natural features of the environment, and relegate the places where everybody else lives to (one of his favorite words) “silences.” Cartouches, those small emblems drawn in the margins of old maps and now a godsend to critical cartographers, showed heraldic crests. “There are no map signs for poverty or squalor, and the bland washes of the map colorer denote a green and pleasant land,” Harley notes, with characteristic grim satisfaction. The soil in the British Empire was not in fact colored pink, except on maps, but the uniform color there helped fix the empire in people’s minds as an organic whole. (“The way things were going nothing was pink on the map any more,” a character in Barbara Pym’s declinist novel “Quartet in Autumn” reflects.)

As Harley’s colleague J. H. Andrews puts it in his introduction to “The New Nature of Maps,” Harley “gathered ideas from (to quote one of his own lists) information-theory, linguistics, semiotics, structuralism, phenomenology, developmental theory, hermeneutics, iconology, Marxism, and ideology.” Despite, or perhaps because of, the capacious intellectual toolkit at his disposal, Harley is deeply unwilling to admit that most maps are used by most people for simple directional purposes. To him, a map is a “social construction,” a “thick text,” a “redescription of reality,” a “silent arbiter of power,” a “polemic,” a “manifesto for a set of beliefs about the world,” or a “text of power.” Even the official state highway map of North Carolina, he insists, is “making other dialogical assertions behind its mask of innocence and transparence,” by which he means that its emphasis on superhighways subjects other aspects of the Tarheel State to those dreaded “silences.” As Jeremy Black, another critical cartographer, writes in his own, somewhat disjointed new collection of essays, “Maps and Politics” (Chicago; $35), the work of Harley and his followers is flawed by an impulse to “search for conspiracy” and “a tendency to state the obvious.”



The work of the Harley school, once encountered, makes it impossible to look at maps in a completely straightforward way ever again. Instead, the urge to decode arises every time you come across one (and, once you stop taking maps for granted, it’s amazing how often you do). The question is whether the habit of reading maps as sociopolitical artifacts can generate something more complicated and coherent than mordantly ironic observations about the subtexts of specific maps—the scholarly equivalent of the running commentary that knowing college kids produce as they sprawl on couches and watch old television shows. Another new book on maps, “The Geographical Imagination in America, 1880-1950” (Chicago; $40), by Susan Schulten, steps up to the challenge of producing a full-length work about the political economy of mapmaking. Schulten, a historian at the University of Denver who has a basically Harleyan consciousness (“Maps are arguments that mediate our understanding of the world,” she writes), has done an enormous amount of research and put together an ambitious history of the rise of popular cartography in the United States.

This country, Schulten says, was the birthplace of maps and geography for the masses. Published maps were traditionally made by the copper-engraving process, which yields fine but expensive work. The advent of the much cheaper, though less elegant, wax-engraving process, in the mid-nineteenth century, made it possible to publish maps for a popular audience. American map publishers—in particular, Rand McNally, of Chicago, whose archives Schulten has perused extensively—used wax engraving to develop a distinctively American style of map, loud and commercial, crammed with as many place-names as possible, in thick type, and garishly colored state by state. Nineteenth-century American commercial mapmakers were pathologically particular in their treatment of the United States and pathologically general in their treatment of the rest of the world. “Most of the civilized people of the world belong



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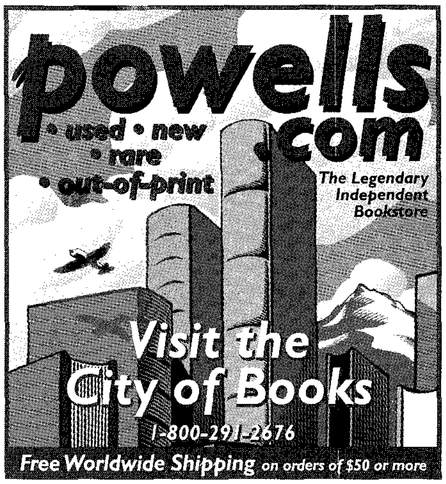

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to the white race, though in some countries the people of that race are half-civilized," reported Rand McNally's "Elementary Geography," a textbook published in 1894 for the booming public-school geography-class market. "The savages belong to the red, brown, and black races. Most people of the yellow race are half-civilized, but you will read some day of the yellow people of Japan."

With the Spanish-American War and the rise of American imperialism, Americans began to focus much more seriously on faraway places. Schulten is not exactly soft on imperialism, but she presents it as a developmental step in geography, objectionable on its own but less so if seen as a station on the way to true understanding: better to think of the world as an arena for commercial exploitation than not to think about it at all. Schulten explores this phase through the magazine *National Geographic*, which became prominent in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Like Rand McNally, *National Geographic* is a peculiarly American institution, part public agency (with its official expeditions and articles by government authorities), part academic journal (published by a society of experts), and part high-minded mass entertainment (naked photographs of dusky maidens). During and after the Spanish-American War, it published many articles about the new little siblings in the American family, Cuba and the Philippines, as a way not so much of justifying our foreign policy as of making people feel comfortable with the idea of being linked to such exotic locales. *National Geographic* reassured us by presenting them as charming and folkish, rather than as threatening; its central editorial goal, as the magazine's brilliant editor, Gilbert Grosvenor, put it later in a letter to one of his contributors, was to provide "mental relaxation without emotional stimulus."

Unlike Harley, Schulten seems to have gone native in the course of her research. To her, the leading mapmakers are more than just one-dimensional avatars of entrenched power, and she is sympathetic to them when, by her lights, they are trying to behave well. The last part of her book presents the mid-twentieth century as the dawn of a golden age of geographic understanding. The American map industry, having advanced from race-and-climate-are-destiny theories to an interest in faraway places as potential areas of economic exploitation, awoke to questions about the good of all people, not just Americans. Several weeks after Pearl Harbor, Franklin Roosevelt gave a radio address urging people to go out and buy a world map, and an awful lot of them did. Sales of geographic material soared during the war years. *National Geographic* and then Rand McNally abandoned their habit of filling every available bit of map surface with place-names, and adopted a suaver, more European style of presentation. Commercial aviation led to maps that showed the world from a point above the North Pole, with the Arctic Ocean as the "new Mediterranean." Rand McNally replaced its old Imperial Atlas with an elaborately produced Cosmopolitan Atlas.

During the Second World War, Schulten reports, practically cheering, even the Mercator projection—which had dominated world mapping since it was devised, in 1569—finally fell out of favor. Mayor LaGuardia personally banned its use in New York City public schools in 1943, perhaps afraid that another generation of schoolchildren would grow up thinking that Greenland was the size of South America. *National Geographic* now uses the oval Robinson projection, and when you move out of the mass market in a leftward direction you encounter the Peters projection, developed in 1967, which makes the Third World look bigger than the First and the Second—and thus "embodies the map as redistributive polemic," according to Jeremy Black. At the end of Schulten's story, she finds a mapmaker she feels comfortable lionizing: Richard Edes Harrison, whose maps offered gorgeous, sweeping views of the globe from unfamiliar angles—they look like the photographs that astronauts take. Many of them were produced at the height of the war, and they implicitly communicate internationalist editorial messages (e.g., the United States is highly vulnerable to attack from all sides). Harrison, Schulten notes approvingly, understood "that all cartography was inherently argumentative, and all maps inherently suggestive."

"The Geographical Imagination" is Schulten's first book. A more experienced author might have been able to produce out of all the institutional specifics a magisterial narrative that began at the beginning and ended at the end. Instead, each chapter is a mini-monograph, and the weight of detail about the different geographic institutions can become oppressive. Schulten has clearly demonstrated that mapping is a subject that can support sustained historical inquiry. What she hasn't demonstrated is that it can also support intellection richer and more interesting than the two or three fairly straightforward changes she manages to ring on the basic idea of critical cartography.

Critical cartography is propelled by an odd mixture of cynicism and idealism. After having expertly seen through the bad faith of mapmakers up to this point, writers in the field usually express the hope that future mapmakers, elevated by self-awareness and progressive principles, can produce maps that will be as benevolent as past maps have been baneful. They are reformers at heart. J. B. Harley, rather than wanting mapmaking to free itself of the indicia of power relations, merely wanted it to be more in line with his politics. His collection of essays winds up with a call for cartographers to endorse "principles of social justice" in order to produce "a socially responsible representation of the world." It is a hope that Susan Schulten seems to share.

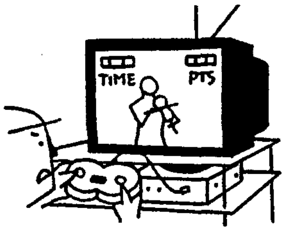
Could this really happen? One of the critical cartographers' strongest points is that maps, like every human endeavor, are saturated with temporal, social, political, and economic contexts that their makers can't transcend. Imagine if the Peters projection had been developed in 1569 and the Mercator four centuries later. Would history really have unfolded differently? And, if so, how, exactly? Critical cartography is persuasive in arguing that maps are more than straightforward collections of geographic data—"constitutive, not representative," as Jeremy Black puts it. What is not so persuasive is the idea that enlightened mapmakers could somehow break out of the perspectival prison in which we are all consigned to dwell, and direct us to a better world. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Faithless, *by Joyce Carol Oates (Ecco; $27).* There is a distinct Oates manner: headlong and almost claustrophobically subjective. In this collection of twenty-one stories, she is at her best where the tone is restrained. As usual, most of her characters are unblessed by self-knowledge; and some are blessed by little except boils and pimples—hypersensitivities of the skin and of the soul. There is a primal affair between a brilliant married composer and a stellar, also married intellectual, and a more disastrous one between a female teacher and a male student. In the title story, one of several in which scholarships play the role of fairy godmother, you learn only at the end what a chilling background the farm girl has escaped. It's a resonating finish, unusually resolute for this author.

Coming Back to Me, *by Caroline Leavitt (St. Martin's; $24.95).* The lovebirds at the center of this novel don't exactly lead charmed lives. Gary, a graphic designer, lost both his parents in a bizarre accident when he was just a baby. Molly, a third-grade teacher, has only a sister, Suzanne, whom she hasn't spoken to in years. Still, Gary and Molly have each other, and when Molly gets pregnant they feel that things might be looking up. But, shortly after delivering a baby boy, Molly falls into a coma. Left to care for the infant on his own, Gary eventually calls in Suzanne. While the novel has its problems—the plotting is busy, the minor characters are both numerous and negligible—Leavitt's devotion to her central characters, and to a surprisingly pessimistic world view, gives the story a certain gravity.

Walking the Bible, *by Bruce Feiler (Morrow; $26).* An unpretentious account of a hike around the Holy Land with the author, who describes himself as a not very devout American Jew, and his delightful, knowledgeable guide, an Israeli archeologist named Avner Goren. The pair started at Mt. Ararat, in Turkey, and ended on Mt. Nebo, in Jordan, where Moses died. They followed the patriarchs' trails, visited Egypt, and struggled across the Sinai Desert. Mt. Sinai, Feiler reminds us, is where Moses received the Ten Commandments, God's first written communication, at around the same time as the alphabet, a recent Semitic invention, was gaining acceptance. But history and archeology are not the point of this book, or of the Bible. All the people Feiler encountered—Christians, Jews, Muslims, unbelievers, pilgrims, locals—felt that the Bible spoke to them about their own lives.



Five-Finger Discount: A Crooked Family History, *by Helene Stapinski (Random House; $23.95).* The author's forebears left Italy, Poland, and Russia more than a century ago and settled in Jersey City, then a flourishing industrial center and transportation hub. They found work but met prejudice: the Irish, who, with the help of a brutal police force, controlled the corrupt political machine, despised the newcomers. Many of Stapinski's relatives became criminals, and in this candid, unsentimental memoir she suggests that boss rule created a climate for the "crimes and immoral acts" they committed. As Jersey City decays, family members go to college, leave the ethnic ghetto, and no longer find felony amusing.

Hollow City, *by Rebecca Solnit, with photographs by Susan Schwartzenberg (Verso; $27).* The Internet boom transformed San Francisco into a suburb of Silicon Valley, and the resulting housing squeeze and accelerated gentrification of low-income neighborhoods created a cultural crisis. Schwartzenberg's images survey more than thirty years of upheaval in the name of "urban renewal," and Solnit's text brings urgency to the question of whether a place in which artists, activists, and members of diverse races and classes can no longer afford to live is fated to become "a city of presentation without creation."

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MUSICAL EVENTS

CASINO ROYALE

Prokofiev's belated Met début.

BY ALEX ROSS

Alexei, the hero of Dostoyevsky's novella "The Gambler," knows that he has an unhealthy attraction to gambling, yet he can imagine no way out other than to gamble more. He is in the employ of a foolish general, who is living beyond his means at a German spa, and he is in love with the general's stepdaughter, who has entanglements of her own. Alexei sees the roulette wheel as a way of advancing himself in this dubious society. "I ought to have gone away," he says of his first turn at the tables, "but a strange sensation rose up in me, a sort of defiance of fate, a desire to challenge it, to put out my tongue at it." One night, he wins so much that he breaks the bank, but in the process he permanently loses touch with reality. Years later, more desperate than ever, he is still trying to repeat the unrepeatable. "I have only for once to show will power," he exclaims, "and in one hour I can transform my destiny!"

In 1915, Sergei Prokofiev made the risky decision to set "The Gambler" as an opera. The composer was only twenty-four years old and had little experience in the theatre. Diaghilev, who wanted him to devote his energies to the Ballets Russes, told him to abandon the project because opera itself was dead. Still, Prokofiev forged ahead, creating his own libretto from stretches of Dostoyevskian dialogue. At first, the match of subject and style seems bizarre: Prokofiev's orchestra is a machinelike apparatus of banging rhythms and grinding bitonal chords. But this monomaniacal accompaniment is best understood as a substitute for Alexei's first-person narration. The ostinatos are like the mechanical pistons of his compulsion.

Some composers are born to write opera, and some are not. With "The Gambler," Prokofiev demonstrated that he had the gift. Each act follows a perfectly modulated dramatic arc, going from episodes of grotesque comedy to climaxes of piercing psychological force, and there are two fabulous coups de théâtre. The first comes at the end of Act II, when the general's ancient aunt, who was assumed to be on her deathbed, unexpectedly shows up at the casino and begins frittering away her fortune. "I'm not giving you any money!" she thunders, in tones reminiscent of the starving chorus in "Boris Godunov." The second coup arrives during the final bars of the opera, as Alexei's long-drawn-out dissolution at the gambling tables is compressed into the single line "Red came up twenty times in a row!" The granitic closing chords are damaged versions of major triads, with extra tones fixed to them, like barnacles on the back of a beached whale.

The story's relationship to its author is clear: Dostoyevsky overcame his own gambling addiction partly through the act of confessing it. What about the opera's relationship to its composer? Prokofiev, who prided himself on detachment and discipline, did commit one extraordinary gamble in his life: in 1936, he ended a comfortable Parisian exile and returned to Russia. Having seen how fearful conditions in the Soviet Union had become, he arbitrarily decided that Stalinism could not touch him. "Prokofiev was an inveterate gambler," Dmitri Shostakovich later commented. "He thought that he had calculated perfectly and that he would be a winner this time, too." Like Alexei, Prokofiev believed that pure will power could overcome fate. Instead, he endured a string of official humiliations that left him a broken man. In a final twist that Dostoyevsky might have found heavy-handed, he and Stalin died on the same day.

Until the other night, when the Met presented a new production of "The Gambler," America's leading opera company had never played a note of Prokofiev. It is thanks mostly to Valery Gergiev, who is conducting the current run of performances at the Met, that Western audiences are beginning to pay heed to an exceptional dramatic output. Gergiev has so far recorded six of the eight Prokofiev operas for the Philips label; the most striking in the series are "Betrothal in a Monastery," the composer's pitch-perfect tribute to Restoration comedy, and "Semyon Kotko," his effort at doctrinaire socialist realism, which turns out to be a deeper and grander piece than textbook descriptions suggest. Next season, Gergiev will lead a production of "War and Peace," whose effectiveness on the Met stage can only be guessed at. Once the conductor is done, history books may have to be rewritten and Prokofiev placed alongside Strauss, Janáček, Berg, and Britten as one of the twentieth century's major opera composers.

To stage "The Gambler," the Met hired four of Gergiev's collaborators at the Kirov Opera: the director Temur Chkheidze, the set designer George Tsypin, the costume designer Georgi Alexi-Meskhishvili, and the lighting designer James Ingalls. Together they create a riot of surreal images. Most of the action takes place on the spa's grounds, with topiary towering here and there like Futurist cones and rockets. In Act IV, the motion of the roulette wheel is suggested by a gigantic pinwheel of lights over the stage. As Alexei loses his mind, a dozen other fluorescent and neon beams blink on and off in seesawing, drunken patterns. You could make a case for a more insinuating, realistic approach, but this Weimar Vegas nightmare strikes to the heart of the score.

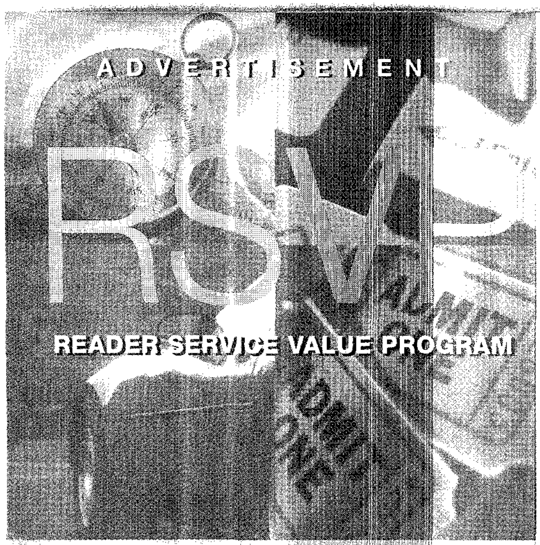
The star of the show is the splendid Russian tenor Vladimir Galouzine. There has been speculation in the opera world that Galouzine might prematurely be wearing out his substantial lyric-heroic voice, but on opening night he sounded at once strong and supple. At the end, he dared to sing the optional high B indicated in the score, and he hit it dead on. He is also an excellent actor and even a bit of a dancer: he padded around the stage like a moody, diseased version of Chaplin's Tramp. Elena Obraztsova matched him with a rapid, hysterical tour de force as the old woman, and Olga Guryakova, as her young relative, showed a gleaming soprano. In the pit, Gergiev whipped up a characteristic storm of sound, but he also lavished attention on the score's nocturnal episodes. He played a game of cat

Galouzine and Guryakova in "The Gambler": The irrational exuberance of a casino addict. Photograph by Chris Callis.

and mouse with the audience, luring us in with lyrical hallucinations and then slamming us with discordant reality.

One reason for Prokofiev's ill-advised retreat from Paris to Moscow was that he had grown tired of being compared to Igor Stravinsky. Stalin, at least, enforced one consistent style. In the New York of the zeroes, as in the Paris of the twenties, Stravinsky remains the preferred composer of the cognoscenti, and an informal, citywide festival of his work has been drawing good crowds. In the past several weeks, the Los Angeles Philharmonic presented two all-Stravinsky programs at Lincoln Center, the Eos Orchestra put on an evening of Stravinsky chamber theatre, and the London Sinfonietta played the thorny late works at Carnegie Hall.

Oliver Knussen led the Londoners in virtuoso accounts of the Variations and "The Flood," although the music still seemed emotionally inert. Esa-Pekka Salonen and his Los Angeles players found more color and wit in the neoclassical "Dumbarton Oaks" Concerto than has ever seemed possible. But it was the Eos Orchestra concert that really liberated Stravinsky from his reputation for fastidious self-denial. Jonathan Sheffer, Eos's director, brought in Christopher Alden to stage the works, with spectacularly mixed results. The notion of "Renard" as a tale of gay Russian soldiers was a non-starter, but "L'Histoire du Soldat" as a one-man show, starring the writer and actor Philip Littell, went through the roof. Jabbering in English, French, and German, acting a half-dozen roles, and veering from high camp to low melodrama, Littell created a vertiginous slapstick universe in which Stravinsky's music sounded exuberantly at home. ◆



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THE CURRENT CINEMA

STILL HUNGRY

A trip to the multiplex.

BY DAVID DENBY

I left the screening room last week and went to the movies the way the rest of the country does. With a friend, I saw "Say It Isn't So" at the new AMC complex at Forty-second and Eighth, a gigantic spangled sarcophagus, yellowish in color, in which twenty-five theatres sullenly show pictures to the public. We had time to kill, so we settled in at AMC's food court, where the world's great cuisines are summoned from the four corners of Newark airport. After a careful perusal of the menu at Ranch 1, we chose the Grilled Chicken Sandwich—wet pieces of fowl and lettuce in a limp envelope of dough. Time grew short, however, and there was no obvious way up to the theatres. My friend, a literary intellectual who lives for movies, suddenly took off, charging up a very long escalator that was rapidly moving downward. Without thinking, I followed, carrying a briefcase as heavy as a cement bag. My friend stumbled, fell on his nose, then righted himself and flung his body onto the landing. With dimming vision and pounding heart, I flailed my way upward and at last got to the top, propelled by the thought of a tabloid obit: Critic collapses on escalator while racing to a Heather Graham movie.

At the moment, the eagerness of the audience to be entertained outstrips the movie industry's ability to entertain us. I saw three movies for this column, all as damp and limp as a fast-food sandwich. "Blow," the story of a real-life cocaine dealer—a Massachusetts man who sold the Medellín cartel's dope to mainstream America in the seventies—would seem to offer the perfect vehicle for Johnny Depp to become a major star. As a young man, Depp gave fey, withdrawn performances in such pictures as "Edward Scissorhands" and "Benny and Joon." He was rail thin, solemn, and vaguely greenish in complexion, but he had very dark eyes and beautiful porcelain features and a habit of silent concentration—a poetic melancholy—which made it hard to ignore him. Europeans always complain that Americans lack repose, but Depp had it in spades. He went on to do solid, grownup work in "Donnie Brasco" as a disciplined undercover F.B.I. agent who infiltrates the Mob; he held his own in semi-silence against Al Pacino, no easy feat. In the current "Before Night Falls," Depp makes a dazzling cameo appearance, and in "Chocolat," an overblown trifle, he is a pleasingly glamorous romantic figure, so handsome and indistinct that women can pin any fantasy they like onto him.

But "Blow" isn't Depp's breakout movie. Based on a book by Bruce Porter, its hero-victim is one George Jung, an apparently unintelligent and feckless man who is now moldering in prison. "Blow" is structured as a commonplace cautionary tale, with Depp narrating, in a sludgy Boston accent, George's misadventures from the sour end point of his life. The son of a loving, honest working stiff (Ray Liotta) and a rancorous, money-obsessed bitch (Rachel Griffiths), George escapes to California in the nineteen-sixties and slips into the drug trade. The way the director, Ted Demme, and the screenwriters, David McKenna and Nick Cassavetes, tell the story of George's rise, he was ambitious, ignorant, and very lucky—the movie is a series of semi-comic riffs

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RIDE ALONG ENCLOSED IN BOOK NC-1.

on how casually George operated, how unwary he was of risk and treachery on all sides. He meets the Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar (Cliff Curtis), and magic comes into his life. George makes so much money selling cocaine in the States that he can't find room for another box of cash in his Los Angeles house. The trouble is, we can't believe much of this—at least, not the way it's presented here. Apart from one scary episode with Escobar, the scenes are flimsily staged—thin and underdone. Ted Demme (the nephew of Jonathan Demme) can't seem to activate the undercurrents; he stays on the surface, doing one thing at a time, and his characters are half formed, their motivations cloudy. "Blow" is just a series of strung-together episodes, and now and then Demme throws in the towel and resorts to a rapid montage of shots meant to convey the giddy drug life—a flashing breast or two, a dominatrix with a whip, a cloud of white powder. But this isn't directing, and it isn't evocation, either; it's more like flinging a loosely pasted scrapbook onto the floor and asking the audience to sort it out.

The unconvincing narrative doesn't allow Depp to shape a performance. He shuttles from one scene to the next, playing a seeming innocent, a child-man with long blond hair who's a little lost in his own tumultuous life. "Blow," it turns out, is a highly self-serving account of Jung's career. George becomes the chief importer of cocaine into the United States, yet, as far as we can see, he doesn't have a bodyguard, he has no one beaten or killed, he betrays no one. On the contrary, everyone, in the end, betrays *him:* his smiling Colombian partner (Jordi Molla) and his California partner (Paul Reubens), too; his nasty mother; his tigerish, infantile wife (Penelope Cruz); even his daughter, who won't visit him in the slammer. Poor George! All he wanted to do was get rich and have a good time, and look at the terrible things people did to him. We're meant to be sympathetic. (I'm enough of a scold to say, Look at the terrible things George did to the inner cities, laid waste by crack cocaine—but there is no mention of such damage in "Blow.") Near the end, the movie falls from boasting to self-pity: the nice guy turns into a sad sack who should have listened to his dad's platitudes about love and money. In form, "Blow" resembles Scorsese's "GoodFellas," but this is a "GoodFellas" without spirit, honesty, or inner acquaintance with evil—without the fire of talent.

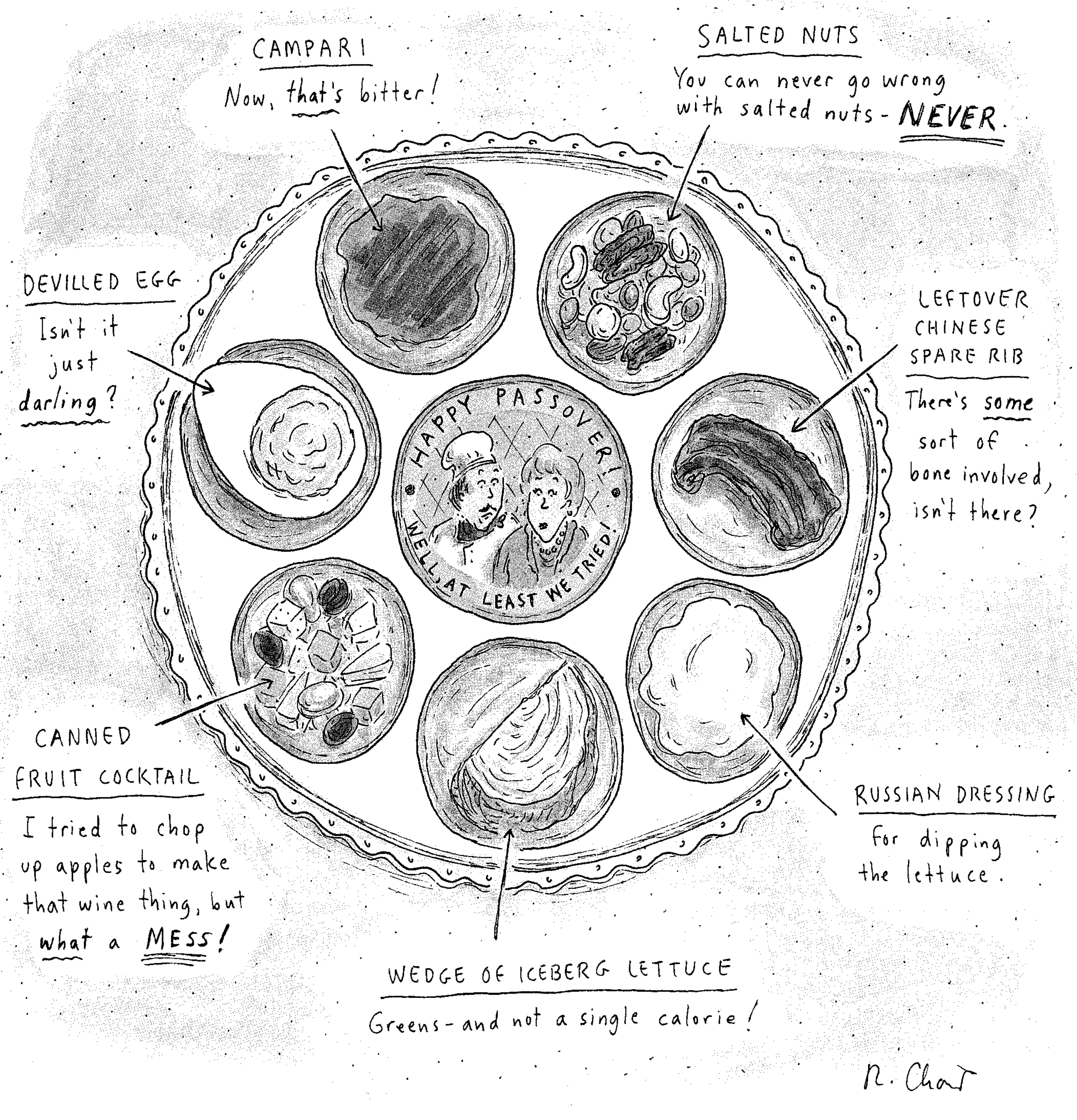
Johnny Depp plays a drug dealer in search of sympathy in "Blow."

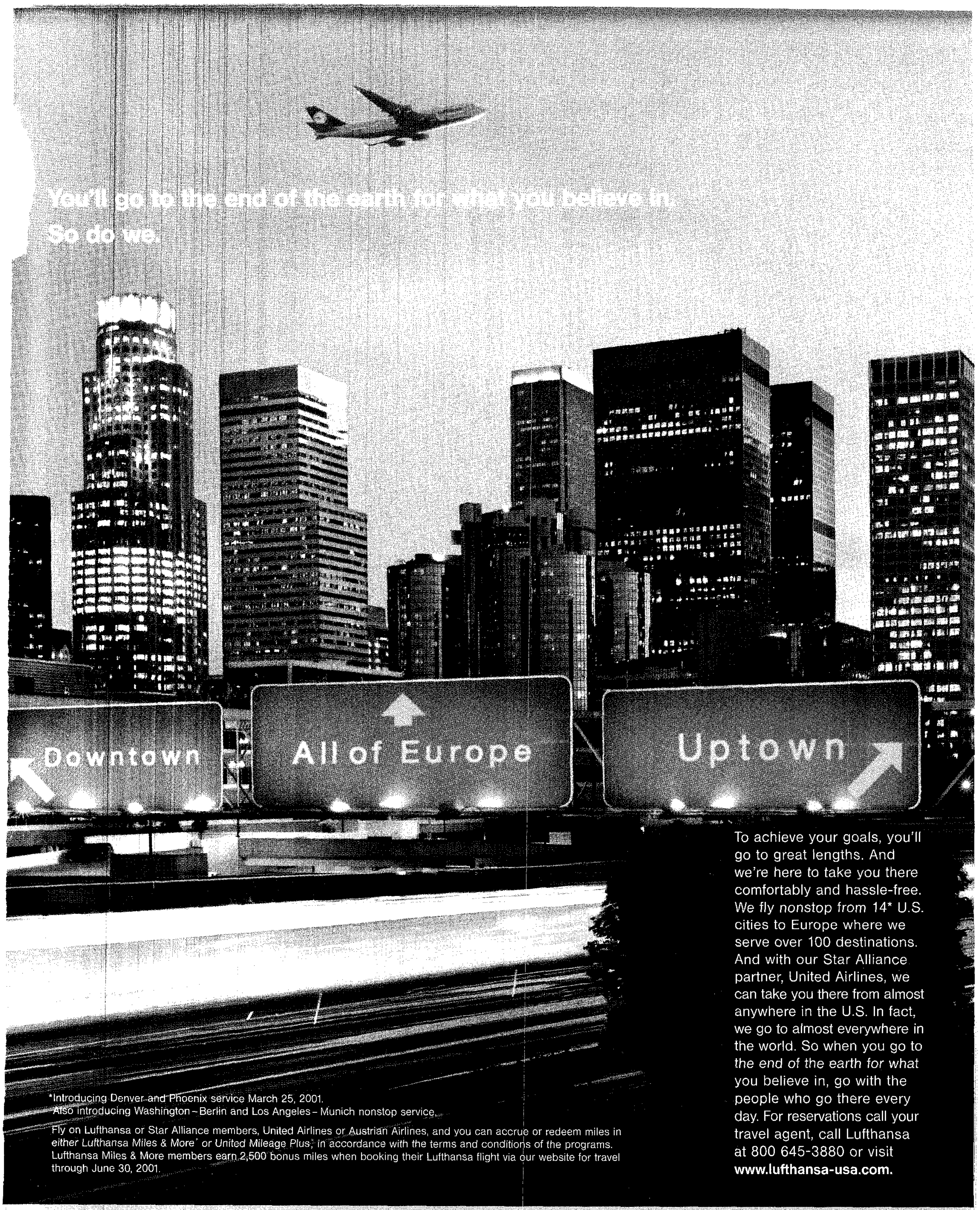
STEPHEN KRONINGER

In cruddy movies, a single bit of inspiration may keep us sitting in our seats. In "Heartbreakers," for instance, Gene Hackman does a great smoker's cough. The first time we see him, he emerges from his house in Palm Beach and doubles over, trembling and wheezing—he produces coughs within coughs, like a virtuoso violinist double-stopping, and he smiles through his hyper-articulate spasms, proud of his misery. This reeking piece of male decrepitude—an expiring billionaire—is quickly taken as a mark for the mother-daughter confidence team of Max (Sigourney Weaver) and Page (Jennifer Love Hewitt). Max lures wealthy men into marriage, and libidinous Page then leads them into adultery, which gives Max grounds for a highly advantageous divorce settlement. "Heartbreakers" has a neat premise, but it's no more than occasionally funny. The most depressing thing about it is that its mediocrity may have been intentional. At the moment, "Go dumb" is the mantra, and so, in a genre that has always featured sophistication, wit, and the play of social surfaces, "Heartbreakers" features a statue with an erect penis that's used for gags over and over. Sigourney Weaver, as will-driven as always, proves that at the age of fifty-one she can play a femme fatale, but not that she can do it with delight. There's an imperial grandeur to Weaver's gestures—she takes her dress off with a flourish and reveals underwear like plated armor. But she doesn't have the ease, the flowing and incandescent changeability of a natural comedienne. We see the wheels of determination turning. And Weaver has been bizarrely matched up with a tricky TV actress about half her size, Jennifer Love Hewitt, who might have been dreamed up by a very literal-minded teen-age boy—all high round breasts and swivelling rear and avid features ready to devour. Love Hewitt darts here and there and speaks in a soul-curdling snarl. It's hard to think of another actress whose body has been so prominently featured in a movie and who, at the same time, displays so little sensuality.

As for "Say It Isn't So," Heather Graham, of the unblinking eyes and curtained blond tresses, and Chris Klein, whose innocence was inviolate in "Election" and "American Pie," get caught in a slapped-together Farrelly Brothers derivative (the gross-out brothers' protégé J. B. Rogers directed it; they produced). At one point, Klein unaccountably gets his hand stuck up the rear of a cow, which then drags him along. The joke makes no sense at all, but Klein's situation pretty much describes that of the theatre-complex audience in a lousy movie season, pulled along and hoping for something more redolent of pleasure. ◆

THE SEDER PLATE AT YE OLDE YANKEE INNE


CAMPARI
Now, that's bitter!
SALTED NUTS
You can never go wrong with salted nuts - NEVER.
DEVILLED EGG
Isn't it just darling?
LEFTOVER CHINESE SPARE RIB
There's some sort of bone involved, isn't there?
HAPPY PASSOVER!
WELL, AT LEAST WE TRIED!
CANNED FRUIT COCKTAIL
I tried to chop up apples to make that wine thing, but what a MESS!
RUSSIAN DRESSING
For dipping the lettuce.
WEDGE OF ICEBERG LETTUCE
Greens - and not a single calorie!
R. Chast



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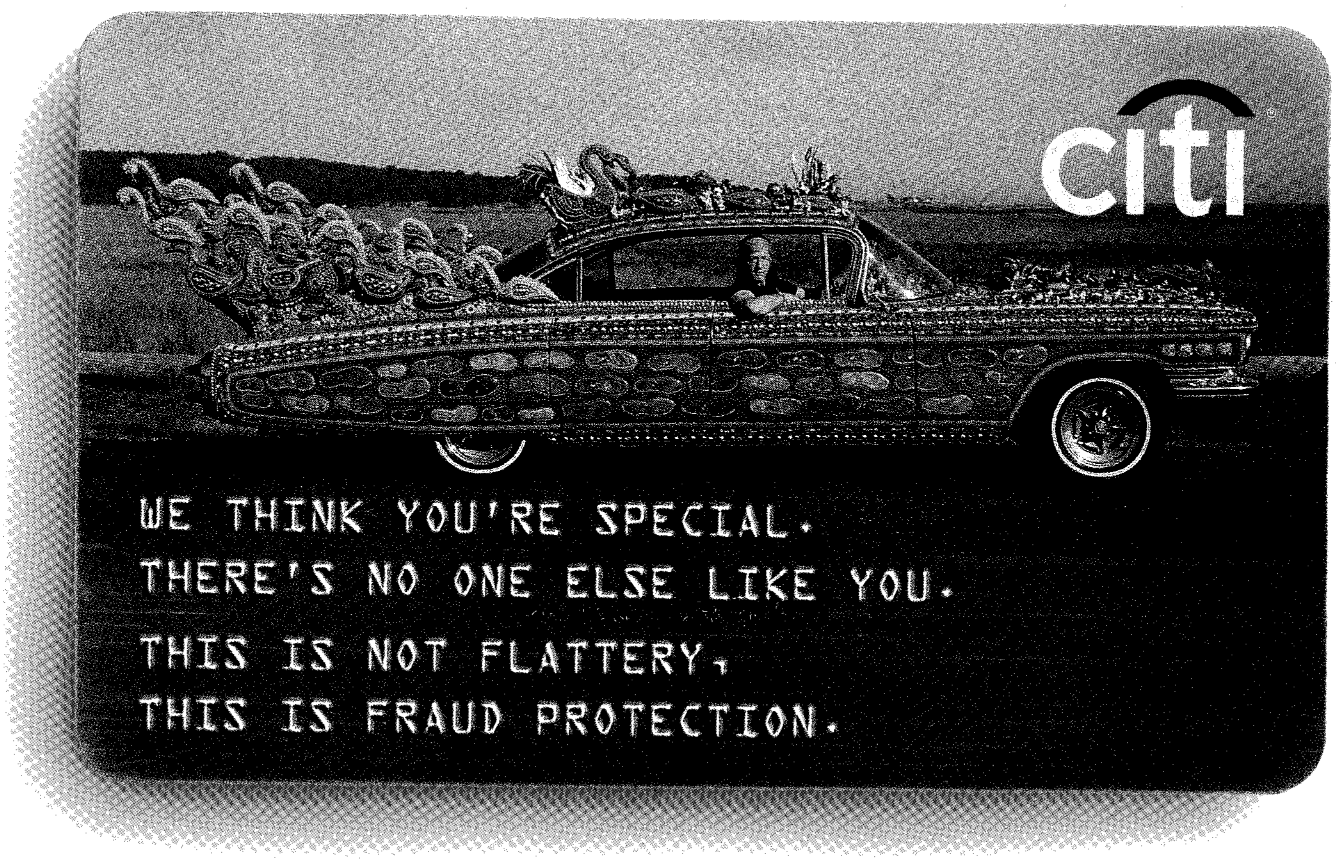
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